

COESAM/PDER-96-006

## US Army Aviation Center and Fort Rucker, Alabama

### Historic Preservation Plan Cultural Overview

#### Final Report

Contract No. DACW01-94-D-0010,  
Delivery Order No. 0008



Brockington and Associates, Inc.  
Atlanta Memphis Charleston  
1996

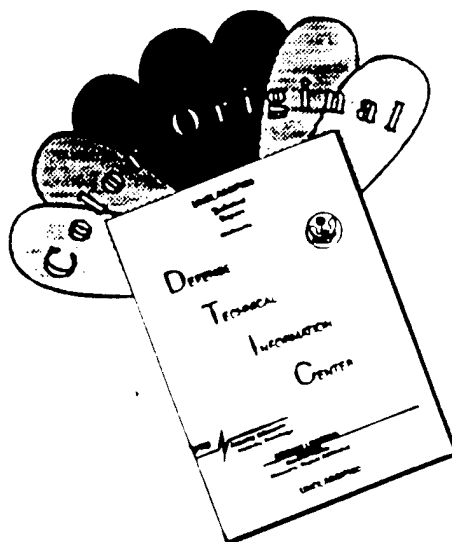
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave Blank)		2. REPORT DATE October 1996	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE US Army Aviation Center and Fort Rucker Historic Preservation Plan Cultural Overview			5. FUNDING NUMBERS DACW01-94-D-0100 Delivery Order 0008	
6. AUTHOR(S)  Todd McMakin, Bruce G. Harvey, and Eric C. Poplin				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  US Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District PO Box 2288 Mobile Alabama 36628-0001			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER  COESAM/PDER-96-006	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  US Army Aviation Center and Fort Rucker For Rucker, Alabama 36362-5000			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT  Unrestricted			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)  This overview of cultural resources at Fort Rucker provides a brief description of the natural setting of the wiregrass region of southeastern Alabama. A summary of the reconstruction of the past environments of the region, from approximately 10,000-15,000 years before present to the development of modern conditions, also is presented. A review of cultural resources investigations conducted at Fort Rucker is presented. An overview of the cultural development evidenced in the region is presented for the prehistoric and historic past. This background information provides the basis for discussion of the nature of cultural resources that have been identified at Fort Rucker. All of this information is then employed to develop specific criteria that may be employed to assess the significance of particular resources within the installation.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Archaeology Gulf Coastal Plain Mississippian Period Coffee County Eastern Red Hills Late Woodland Period Paleoindian Period Dale County Fort Rucker Lithic Debitage Pea River Land Use Project Gulf Formational Period Middle Woodland Period Wiregrass Region				15. NUMBER OF PAGES 90
				16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  UL	

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**Prepared for:**

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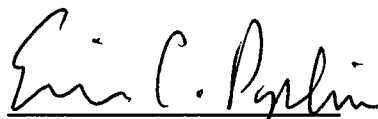
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Atlanta Memphis Charleston  
October 1996**

## Abstract

This document represents the first phase of the development of a Historic Preservation Plan for the US Army Aviation Center and Fort Rucker. The plan will provide a summary of cultural resources investigations conducted to date, discuss the nature of cultural resources identified on the reservation, and outline a program for the management of these resources. The development and implementation of this plan will provide compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, Executive Order 11593, the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as implemented in the Code of Federal Regulation 36CFR60.4 and Army Regulations AR 420-40.

This cultural overview of cultural resources at Fort Rucker provides a brief description of the natural setting of the wiregrass region of southeastern Alabama. A summary of the reconstruction of the past environments of the region, from approximately 10,000-15,000 years before present to the development of modern conditions, also is presented. A review of cultural resources investigations conducted at Fort Rucker is presented. An overview of the cultural development evidenced in the region is presented for the prehistoric and historic past. This background information provides the basis for discussion of the nature of cultural resources that have been identified at Fort Rucker. All of this information is then employed to develop specific criteria that may be employed to assess the significance of particular resources within the installation.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the following staff at the US Army Aviation Center and Fort Rucker for their assistance in the collection of background information. Mike Maxwell and Marlene Resecker in the Real Property Office allowed access to their files, tracked down cemetery information, and photocopied very valuable maps. At the U.S. Army Aviation Museum, Regina Burns was a great help in locating and loaning historic photographs. Dr. John W. Kitchens, Command Historian, graciously opened his extensive files and has since provided very valuable information and advice on the Army Aviation phase of Fort Rucker. Jim Swift, Environmental Officer, served as the Point of Contact; Kenneth Eisele, Chief of Environmental and Natural Resources Division at Fort Rucker, provided administrative assistance. Dr. Charles Moorehead, Mobile District Historian, provided invaluable technical oversight. At Moundville State Archaeological Park, Moundville, Alabama, Eugene Futato and Kathy Myers were a big help in locating Alabama site forms.

In our Atlanta office, C. Scott Butler provided valuable research assistance, while Bill Jordan worked diligently to secure the necessary Alabama site forms. Here in the Charleston office, Carol Poplin prepared the report graphics.

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## Chapter I. Introduction

The US Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, and the US Army Aviation Center and Fort Rucker (Fort Rucker) Directorate of Public Works (DPW) requested the development of an Historic Preservation Plan (HPP) for historic resources contained within Fort Rucker, Coffee and Dale Counties, Alabama (Figure 1). The HPP is designed to provide the basis for the coordinated management of historic resources within Fort Rucker, and to provide guidelines for staff at Fort Rucker in complying with existing Federal legislation concerning the management of historic resources located on Federal lands. This legislation includes:

*National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended),*

*Executive Order 11593 (Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment),*

*Archaeological and Historical Preservation Act of 1974,*

*Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.*

This legislation has been implemented under 36 CFR 60 and Army Regulation [AR] 420-40 (Facilities Engineering Historic Preservation). Historic properties include buildings, structures, objects, districts, sites, archaeological materials, landmarks, and historic cemeteries.

The first phase of the HPP included an intensive review of archival information and existing historic resource management reports concerning Fort Rucker. The present Cultural Overview arose from this review, and is designed to complement the HPP and to insure compliance with Federal legislation. Federal regulations concerning historic resource management rely on evaluations of cultural significance. According to guidelines laid down by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service, this significance can be assigned only with the full understanding of the historical and cultural context. This Cultural Overview seeks to provide such a context by drawing on reports of previous studies, published sources, and original historical and archaeological research conducted in conjunction

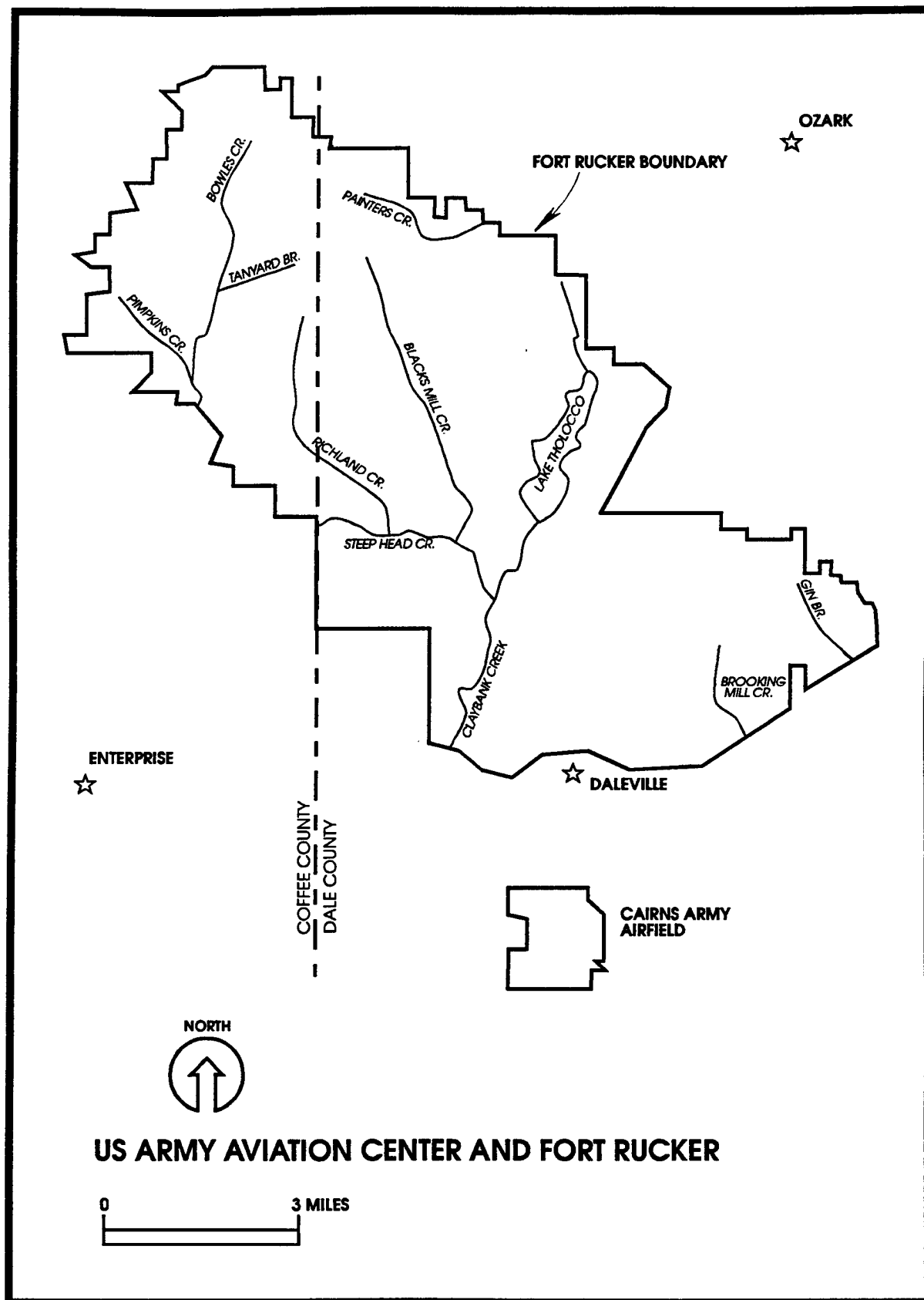


Figure 1. Fort Rucker with Major Drainages Indicated.

with the HPP. It is organized in a roughly chronological fashion as it seeks to unite sources gleaned from archaeological, architectural, and historical research. This chronological organization will help to provide a contextual framework for the various historical properties at Fort Rucker, and provide a basis for evaluating their significance.

Two principal themes arise from this chronological survey of Fort Rucker, which will be covered in greater detail in the succeeding chapters. The fundamental theme is that of limited occupation of the area, in both prehistoric and historic eras. Archaeological and historical evidence suggests that the area has been occupied more or less continuously since the Paleoindian Period, dating to approximately 10,000 BC. However, prehistoric occupation seems to have been limited in extent and duration. While a Native American presence was cause for fear among the early European and American settlers in the southeastern United States, natives were also crucial for those in search of trade or provisions. With few documented natives in southeastern Alabama in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, few white settlers sought out the area. This, combined with soil of questionable value, led to a pattern of slow American settlement in the area throughout the nineteenth century. Those who did settle in the area tended to be yeoman farmers who owned their own land and owned relatively few slaves. Communities in the area tended to be small and widely scattered.

The second theme in Fort Rucker's history, which dominates the twentieth century history of the area, is Federal occupation. By the early twentieth century much of the land, which was marginal at its best, had either been overfarmed or badly eroded. Much of the land in Coffee and Dale Counties was considered submarginal, and was left undeveloped. This presented an opportunity for the implementation of Federal agricultural planning policies instigated in the New Deal in the 1930s. The Federal government purchased approximately half of what is now Fort Rucker in the early 1930s for use as the Pea River Land Use Project. The Federal government relinquished control of the land by 1940, only to regain it in the early 1940s for use as a US Army infantry training reservation. In 1955, it became a permanent installation dedicated to US Army Aviation training. Both Federal occupations, in the 1930s and from the 1940s to the present, have resulted in vast changes to the natural and cultural landscape of Fort Rucker.

This overview will draw upon all historic resources at Fort Rucker, provide a basis for assessing the significance of these resources (i.e., assessment of their eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places [NRHP]), and assist in the development of programs to protect all resources recommended as eligible or potentially eligible for the NRHP. It provides a synthesis of the results of previous historic resource investigations within Fort Rucker in an effort to characterize the nature, distribution, and significance of known resources at the Fort. In addition, sources of degradation for these resources are defined.

The Cultural Overview is composed of five chapters. Chapter II provides an overview of the natural setting of Fort Rucker. The cultural history of Fort Rucker, compiled from documentary, archaeological, and architectural evidence then forms the bulk of the Overview. Chapter III provides an overview of the area's prehistory, while Chapter IV picks up the story with Native Americans in the contact era and the nineteenth century American settlement of the area. Chapter V carries the story of the Fort into the twentieth century which was dominated by the Federal government's presence, with a particular focus on the military history of the area.

## Chapter II. Natural Setting

### Present Environment

Alabama can be divided into four physiographic regions: the Gulf Coastal Plain, the Piedmont, the Ridge and Valley, and the Cumberland Plateau (Walthall 1980:13). Fort Rucker, as well as all of South Alabama, lies within the Gulf Coastal Plain, which is typified by low hills and shallow valleys. Elevations for this region range from sea level to a high of 400 feet above mean sea level. Four major river systems drain South Alabama, namely, the Alabama, the Tombigbee, the Black Warrior, and the Chattahoochee rivers. Fort Rucker lies between the watersheds of the Chattahoochee and the Alabama Rivers. Figure 2 displays these regions and waterways in Alabama with respect to Fort Rucker.

Fort Rucker, which lies within the Eastern Red Hills of the Gulf Coastal Plain, has suffered from intensive erosion. Much of the topography found throughout the region is typified by large, deeply dissected sand and clay hills (Braley and Misner 1986:3). Soils found on Fort Rucker consist primarily of marine sediments deposited during the Lower Tertiary Period (approximately 65,000,000 - 2,000,000 years ago). Two soil groups dominate the region encompassed by Fort Rucker: Shubuta-Cuthbert and Luverne-Lucy. These soil groups consist primarily of moderately well drained to somewhat poorly drained soils within the Luverne-Lucy group (Childs 1969) and well drained soils within the Shubuta-Cuthbert group (Henry et al. 1960). Both of these groups are found on dissected ridge tops and steep slopes that typify the Fort Rucker region.

### *Biota*

The forest within this region of Alabama is dominated by pine. Although the longleaf pine is by far the most prevalent species, there are also large numbers of slash, white, and short leaf varieties. Hardwoods are also present in reduced numbers. They generally are restricted to the swamps, rivers, and creeks that drain the south Alabama region. Fort Rucker, like other areas within the Gulf Coastal

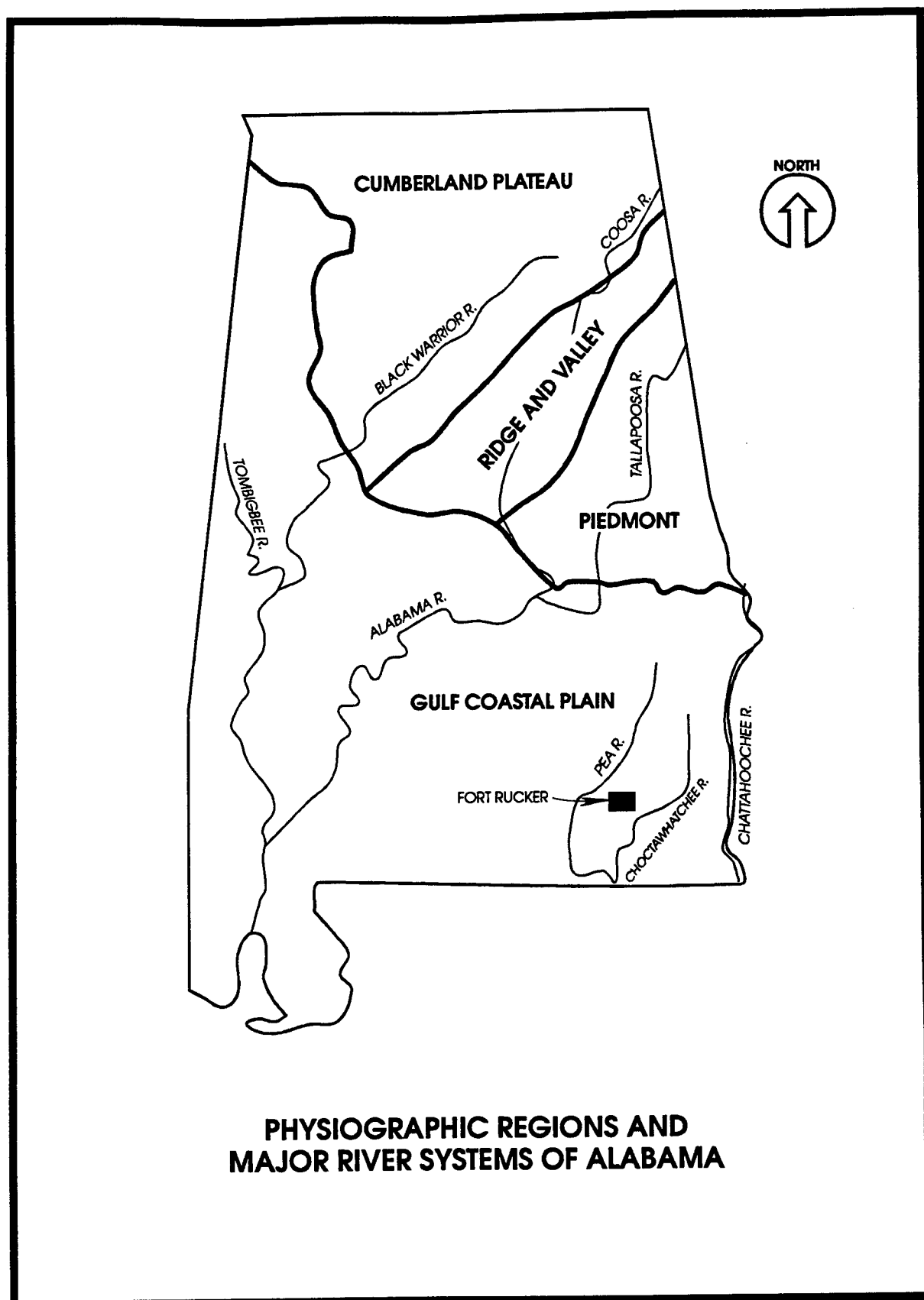


Figure 2. Physiographic Regions and the Major Drainages of Alabama, with Reference to Fort Rucker.



Plain, contains a limited number of floral species. Vegetation on the Fort can be divided into three main categories: pine forest, mixed pine-hardwoods forest, and hardwood forest. These categories are a direct result of growing conditions within different settings. The pine forests found on Fort Rucker are typically located in upland areas such as large ridges and hills. The mixed pine-hardwood forests are typically found on lower slopes and alluvial bottoms. Hardwood stands on the Fort are restricted primarily to the alluvial valleys, and consist of hickory, oak (several species), magnolia, and cypress.

The mild climate of the Alabama Gulf Coastal Plain supports a wide variety of wildlife, including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and fish. Table 1 provides a list of wildlife species present within the region. Of the species present, only a small number are considered to have been of major economic value to past inhabitants; these include deer, turkey, raccoon, beaver, bear, bobcat, opossum, rabbit, squirrel, and turtle. Seasonal resources, such as migratory waterfowl (ducks and geese), also are found throughout the region.

### *Climate*

A variety of factors contribute to Alabama's near subtropical climate; these include location, topography, and air-mass activity (Walthall 1980:13). Long, hot summers are typical of South Alabama; daytime high temperatures at or above 95° F are not uncommon. The average daytime high temperature during the summer approaches 90° F. Winters are typically moderate, with a mean high temperature of 52° F on the Gulf Coastal Plain (Walthall 1980). The growing season in South Alabama averages three hundred days. Precipitation amounts vary from month to month, but annual rainfall averages 135 cm (53 inches). Peak precipitation occurs from December to March. Flooding is not uncommon during these months.

**Table.1 Faunal Resources Available in South Alabama (after Braley and Mitchelson (1984).**

<b>Mammals</b>	<b>Reptiles</b>	<b>Birds</b>	<b>Fish</b>	<b>Amphibians</b>
White-tailed deer	Alligator	Eagle	Largemouth Bass	Frogs
Opossum	Corn snake	Quail	Bluegill	
Red fox	Diamondback rattlesnake	Dove	Redear sunfish	
Bobcat	Copperhead	Vulture	Warmouth	
Skunk	Water Moccasin	Hawks	Black crappie	
Black bear	King snake	Ducks	Sunfish	
Raccoon	Water snake	Songbirds	Pickrel	
Rabbit	Box turtle		Bullhead	
Beaver	Gopher tortoise		Gar	
Gray squirrel			Sucker	
Fox squirrel			Shiner	
Skunk			Pugnose minnow	
Rat			Chub	
Armadillo			Catfish	

### **Past Environments**

Palynological and paleoenvironmental studies in the southeastern United States indicate that between 22,000 and 12,000 years before present (BP) the cool, dry climate favored a mixture of conifers and northern hardwoods. In contrast, during the early Holocene Epoch, forests of the region became dominated by species such as oak, hickory, and southern pine. The beginning of the Holocene Epoch (10,000 BP) represents the end of Pleistocene glacial conditions and the beginning of the inter-glacial stage (Bense 1994:19). By this time, modern flora was established in most of the southeastern United States (Kuchler 1964; Sheehan et al. 1985; Wharton 1989). As the climate continued to warm, the oak-hickory forest advanced northward (Delcourt 1979). Sheehan et al.'s (1985) analysis of regional palynological evidence suggests that spruce, pine, fir, and hemlock rapidly decreased in importance after 9,000 years BP. During the mid-Holocene (5,000 years BP), pines had began to increase in numbers within the oak-hickory forest (Wharton 1989:12).

### **Chapter III. Overview of Prehistoric Development**

The prehistory of Fort Rucker can be divided into five distinctive, yet broad, time periods: Paleoindian (10000 - 8000 BC), Archaic (8000 - 2500 BC), Gulf Formational (2500-300 BC), Woodland (300 BC - AD 900), and Mississippian (AD 900 to 1540). A brief summary of each period follows.

#### **The Paleoindian Period**

Human introduction into the Gulf Coastal Plain of North America probably began after 10000 BC. Securely dated occupation sites from this period have not yet been found in the southeastern United States, and archaeologists must rely on associated stone spear points/knives found in datable contexts elsewhere in the New World. These diagnostic artifacts consist primarily of fluted and unfluted lanceolate projectile points such as Clovis, Folsom, Cumberland, Suwannee, Sante Fe, Simpson, and Quad.

Paleoindian Period sites are among the least frequent site types encountered on Fort Rucker; recent surveys have identified artifacts from this period on only seven sites. This is not unexpected given the overall low densities of Paleoindian sites discovered on the Gulf Coastal Plain, and in the Southeast in general. Paleoindians hunted a variety of large and small animal species, and may have played a role in the extinction of many of the larger species that disappeared in the final years of the Pleistocene glaciation. As is the case with the surrounding river valleys of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, these Paleoindian sites primarily consist of flakes of chipped stone and occasional stone spear points. The Fort Rucker area probably was not a preferred environment for Paleoindian populations, and instead was occupied briefly by small groups moving between adjoining areas.

Several of the Paleoindian sites on Fort Rucker contained only a single diagnostic spear point. Given the low quantities of Paleoindian sites and artifacts at Fort Rucker, it is difficult to identify trends in patterns of settlement. However, most Paleoindian sites are located within 3.0 km of Claybank Creek (Figure 3). This

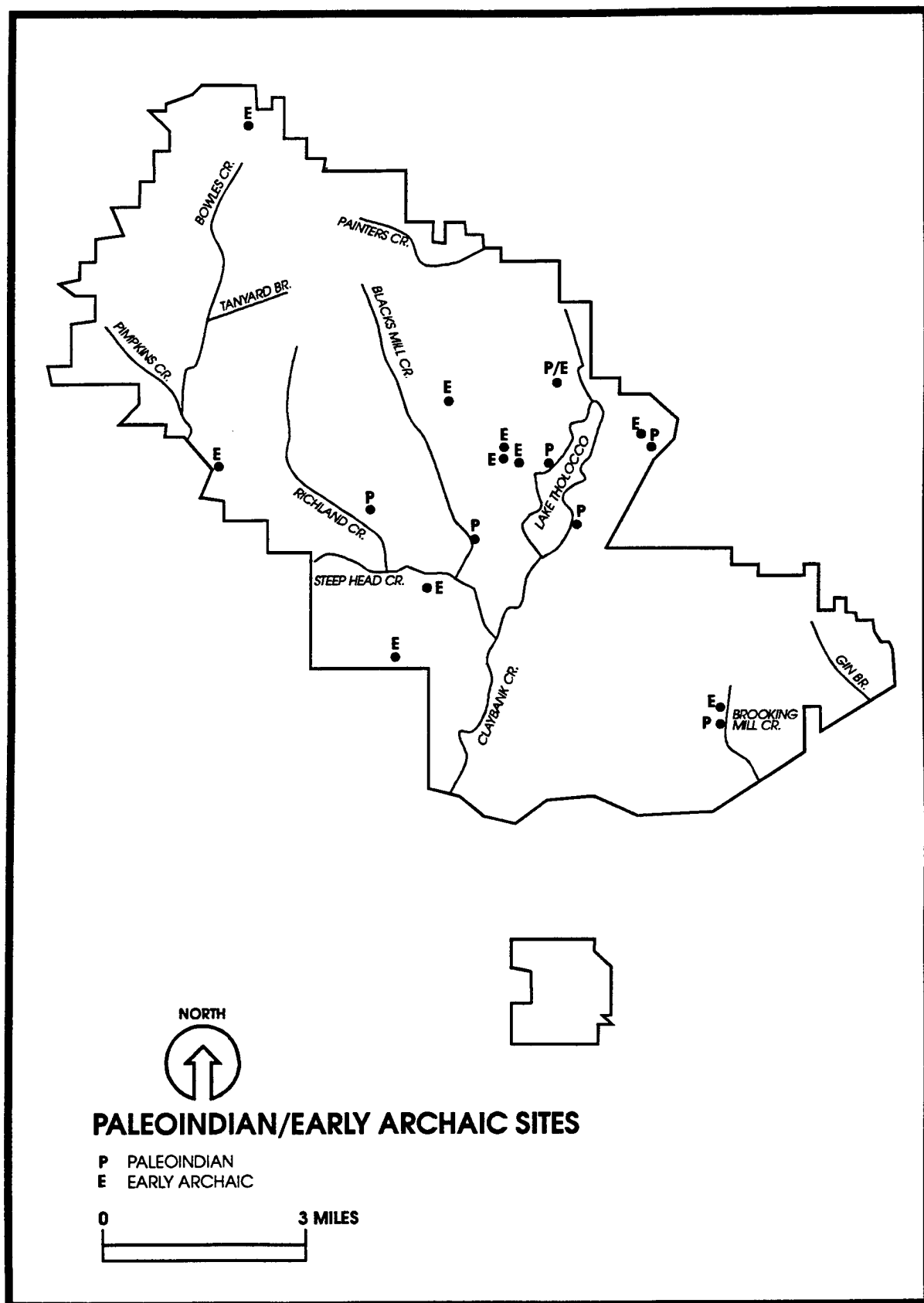


Figure 3. The Distribution of Paleoindian and Early Archaic Sites at Fort Rucker.

area, particularly to the west of Claybank Creek, is the one part of Fort Rucker to have seen more or less continuous human occupation, up to and including the American settlers of the early nineteenth century. This also verifies our present understanding of Paleoindian and Early Archaic settlement patterns in other parts of the Southeast. It is likely that small bands of Paleoindian hunter-gatherers visited the flood plains of rivers and large drainages such as Claybank Creek to gather plants and animals for food and for materials for tools. Sites are expected to be small and should produce only a minimal number of diagnostic artifacts. Base camps of this nature may produce artifacts which indicate such human activities as animal butchering, processing, stone tool production, and possibly habitation.

### **The Archaic Period**

The Archaic Period witnessed many changes in the environment as the forest changed from sub-boreal to modern. The Archaic Period has been divided into three sub-periods: Early Archaic (8000 - 6000 BC), Middle Archaic (6000 - 3000 BC), and Late Archaic (3000 - 2500 BC). Distinctive stone point/knife types serve as markers dividing these sub-periods. Hunting and gathering was the predominant subsistence mode during the Archaic, although humans probably began cultivating a few plants by the Late Archaic Period.

#### ***Early Archaic***

In general, the Early Archaic Period has been viewed as an adaptation to Holocene, postglacial climates (Anderson and Hanson 1988). In many instances, the Early Archaic is known simply as a transitional period between the earlier Paleoindian big-game subsistence and settlement patterns and the later, more diffused Archaic patterns. This change came about after the Altithermal, which was the major climatic shift around 6000 BC, bringing the warmer, more modern climate following the glacial era. Regional cultures or societal units began to appear in the Early Archaic, unlike the relative homogeneity of Paleoindian populations throughout the southeastern US. Changes in the shapes of projectile points demonstrate these growing regional and cultural differences. While Paleoindian

projectile points tended to be uniform throughout the United States, points in the Early Archaic period evolved within these new cultural groups (Walthall 1980; McGahey 1993). Early Archaic populations in the Gulf Coastal Plain of the southeastern United States used both riverine and flood plain environments and inter-riverine uplands (Brooks 1979; McGahey 1992).

Likely early Archaic point types on Fort Rucker include Dalton, Tallahassee, Palmer, Bolen, Big Sandy I, Kirk, McCorkle, St. Albans, LeCroy, and Kanawha. Eleven Early Archaic sites have been identified at Fort Rucker to date. This represents approximately four per cent of all identified sites on the reservation, and fourteen per cent of all datable prehistoric sites. Because so few Early Archaic sites have been found on Fort Rucker, they are not likely to yield any useful geographic data. However, the locations of Early Archaic sites seems to be closely related to those of the preceding Paleoindian Period. Most sites are found again within 3.0 km of Claybank Creek, with a few adjacent to smaller drainages (see Figure 3).

Early Archaic occupants tended to hunt small game, following the gradual extinction of "megafauna" such as mammoths, mastadons, and *bison antiqua*. The weapons and tools that the Early Archaic occupants used remained similar in shape to those of the Paleoindians, although they were used in procuring different foods and they were beginning to show regional differences. Likewise, settlement patterns remained basically the same. As with the preceding Paleoindian Period, most sites datable to the Early Archaic Period consist primarily of flakes of chipped stone with a few diagnostic spear points. With the exception of 1Da47, no Early Archaic sites on Fort Rucker are NRHP eligible. Site 1Da47 is a small, multi-component, scatter of chipped stone located adjacent to Lake Tholocco. Although no features were discovered during 1986 testing (Braley and Misner 1986) of the site, the potential for stratified deposits exists.

### *Middle Archaic*

The climate continued to shift through the Middle Archaic Period. These climatic shifts resulted in a hot, dry weather pattern in the southern United States, which increased thunderstorm activity and changed the form of existing

drainages. This increased thunderstorm activity in turn may have burned off most of the hardwood species in the Southeast (except those in lower, wet areas) and stabilized the growth of pines in this region (Bense 1994:74).

Very little is known about Middle Archaic settlement and subsistence. The shift in the climate, however, represents a force for change, as a rising sea level, in conjunction with these shifts in climate, may have resulted in increased shellfish communities in the Southeast. Surveys have found evidence to suggest an increased consumption of shellfish along with other aquatic species during the Middle Archaic (Smith 1986). Smith (1986) also cites an increase in the numbers of storage pits and burned areas, representing house floors, to suggest that populations were becoming increasingly sedentary during this time.

Middle Archaic occupants made significant advances in stone tool technologies (Bense 1994:75). Sites from this period reveal ground and polished stone utilitarian artifacts (including atlatl weights and celts) for the first time, while spear points switched to a notched form or a variety of stemmed forms. Morrow Mountain points are frequently found at Middle Archaic sites throughout the southeast, with less frequent finds of Stanley and Guilford points. Other Middle Archaic point types that may be encountered in the Fort Rucker region include Halifax, Elora, and Benton. The most common Middle Archaic point encountered at Fort Rucker is the Benton point.

Four Middle Archaic components have been identified on Fort Rucker. This represents approximately one per cent of all sites on Fort Rucker, and five per cent of all datable prehistoric sites. Artifacts from Middle Archaic sites are similar to Late Archaic components, and the diagnostic artifacts from these two periods tend to overlap. In fact, three of the four Middle Archaic components were found in association with Late Archaic components. The exception to this is 1Da102 which produced a stemmed projectile point base and a ground stone celt fragment. These artifacts could represent a Middle Archaic occupation; however, they may also represent a later occupation as well.

The limited number of Middle Archaic components identified at Fort Rucker, and their tendency to be found in conjunction with Late Archaic sites, allows for few

conclusions regarding the settlement patterns of Middle Archaic populations (Figure 4). Middle Archaic sites are found in association with (usually within 2.0 km of) the numerous creeks and rivers that drain the Fort. Unlike earlier occupations, however, these sites are found primarily in association with smaller drainages; only one occupation is located adjacent to Claybank Creek. It is likely, given the inability to define Middle Archaic sites with consistency, that more Middle Archaic sites are present than have been identified. In most cases, these sites are probably represented by small scatters of chipped stone with no diagnostic artifacts. Until diagnostic artifacts from this period can be placed more securely within known cultural contexts, Middle Archaic Period sites will have to rely on absolute methods such as carbon dating. Future research at Fort Rucker should concentrate on Middle Archaic sites when possible. Until more information is available, the Middle Archaic Period at Fort Rucker will remain poorly understood.

### *Late Archaic*

The Late Archaic Period witnessed the final shift to modern climates. This shift resulted in increasingly predictable resources, which allowed populations to increase and move into previously uninhabited areas (Hudson 1976:49-52; Smith 1986). House floors and storage pits appear more frequently in Late Archaic sites, which may indicate an increase in sedentism during this time. The size of sites also tends to increase during this period (Hudson 1976:51-52; Smith 1986; Bense 1994:90; Rafferty 1994). Horticulture seems to have become more important during this period, and full domestication may have occurred as early as the end of the Late Archaic or the beginning of the subsequent Early Gulf Formational Period (Crites 1991; Fritz and Kidder 1993; Smith 1985).

Material technologies during the Late Archaic include the use of steatite (soapstone) for the manufacture of containers. Spear points generally became smaller, while their shape varied little from those of the Middle Archaic. Broad-bladed, long-stemmed points such as the Savannah River type, and narrower, short stemmed Benton types predominate the assemblages from these periods. Otarré points would also be expected at Fort Rucker.



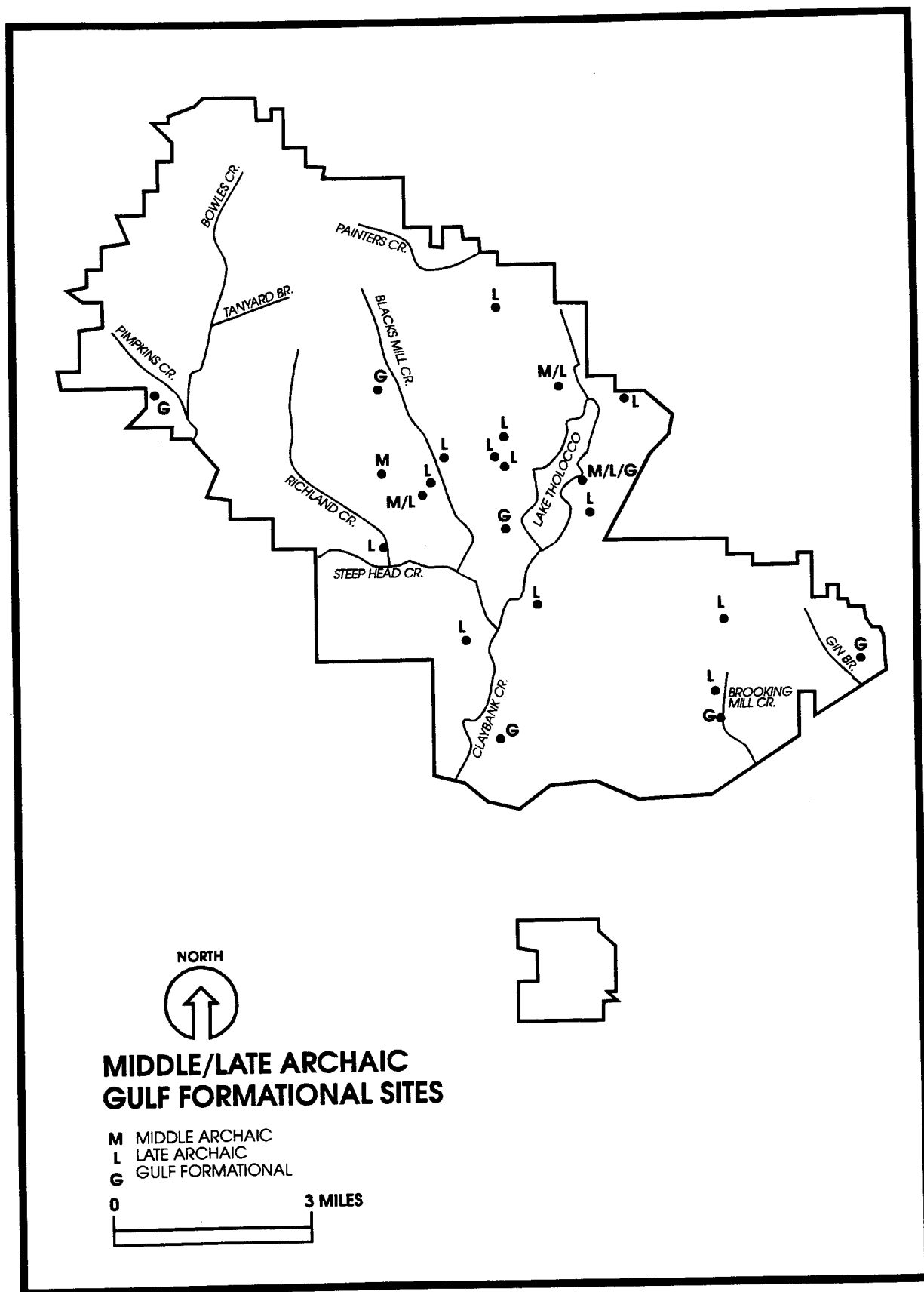


Figure 4. The Distribution of Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, and Gulf Formational Sites at Fort Rucker.

Nineteen sites at Fort Rucker have Late Archaic components, making it the best represented era on the Fort. Approximately 24 per cent of all datable prehistoric sites at Fort Rucker contain a Late Archaic component. Overall, the settlement patterns of these populations are very closely tied to those of the Middle Archaic Period, and most Middle Archaic sites at Fort Rucker also contain a Late Archaic component; this again relates to the difficulty in distinguishing Middle Archaic occupations from Late Archaic occupations. Figure 4 displays locations of Middle and Late Archaic occupations at Fort Rucker. Most of these sites are located within the flood plains of Claybank and Blacks Mill Creeks. A few ephemeral sites are located adjacent to Brooking Mill Creek (n=3), Richland Creek (n=1), and Pimpkins Creek (n=1). Settlement patterns during this period probably represent a continuation of the Middle Archaic trend of small camps located adjacent to small drainages. The majority of these sites are represented by small scatters of chipped stone with only a single, or very few, diagnostic spear points. Two NRHP eligible sites at Fort Rucker contain Late Archaic artifacts (1Da43 and 1Da47).

### **The Gulf Formational Period**

The transition from Archaic to Woodland lifeways lasted over two thousand years, from 2500 to 300 BC. Many of the cultural traditions that continued until European contact emerged during this period. It was a transitional era, however, and populations at the time retained vestiges of earlier Archaic material culture, including stemmed spear points and other chipped stone tools, while adding new technologies including fiber tempered ceramics. Indeed, the Gulf Formational Period was originally defined by Walthall and Jenkins (1976) as a means to classify and define the earliest ceramic producing cultures of the Gulf Tradition. Occupants began shifting from upland settlements to larger settlements located on the flood plains of larger streams during the Gulf Formational Period, and cultural groups extended from the east coast of Florida and Georgia to central Louisiana. Native societies increased in complexity in the Southeastern United States during this period, perhaps reaching a pinnacle in the Poverty Point region of Louisiana and Mississippi. This complexity was revealed in more elaborate trade networks and mortuary behavior.

This period has been subdivided into three sub-periods: Early (2500 - 1200 BC), Middle (1200 - 500 BC), and Late (500 - 300 BC). The distribution of sites from this period is displayed in Figure 4. Seven sites with fiber tempered pottery have been identified to date. Undoubtedly some Late Archaic and Early Woodland sites at Fort Rucker actually date from this period due to the overlap of some artifact types between these periods.

### *Early Gulf Formational*

The Early Gulf Formational sub-period originates with the introduction of fiber tempered ceramics along the southern Atlantic seaboard (Walthall 1980). Although the Stallings Island and Orange cultures have been defined along the Atlantic seaboard during this period, none have been recognized for the Gulf Coastal region to date. This may be due, in part, to a lack of ceramics dating to this period on the Gulf Coast (McMakin 1995:32-33). It is likely that the settlement trends of this period are a continuation of those seen in the Late Archaic Period.

### *Middle Gulf Formational*

The Middle Gulf Formational Period witnessed the introduction of fiber tempered ceramics into the western Gulf Coastal Plain. Wheeler series ceramics of eastern Mississippi and northern Alabama, and the Bayou LaBatre series of the Mobile Bay and Delta areas first appeared during this time. The Middle Gulf Formational was a dynamic era, when much of the Gulf Coastal Plain saw increased territorial interactions and inter-societal connections. It is probable that this period witnessed a shift to a more settled adaptation along the Gulf Coast (McMakin 1995:33; Walthall and Jenkins 1976:47).

### *Late Gulf Formational*

The Late Gulf Formational Period can be characterized by three major events: 1) the disappearance of fiber tempered ceramics, 2) the presence of Alexander and

Tchefuncte ceramics in the western region, and 3) the introduction of Early Woodland Deptford pottery in the east (Walthall 1980:98). There is increased evidence for sedentary villages (Milanich and Fairbanks 1980) and large-scale trade, at least in the Poverty Point region to the north and west (Bense 1994; Gagliano 1967; Gibson 1974).

### **The Woodland Period**

The Woodland Period has also been divided into three subperiods: Early Woodland (300 BC - 1 BC), Middle Woodland (AD 1 - 500), and Late Woodland (AD 500 - 900). Woodland Period settlements presumably included large villages located along the larger creek and river flood plains, as well as many smaller sites located in a variety of environments. Hunting and gathering were supplemented by increased use of cultivated foods including corn and squash. Trading networks became well established and ritual mortuary behavior increased in outward visibility. Woodland Period populations increased, and even more complex societies developed.

#### ***Early Woodland***

The Early Woodland Period is not easily distinguished from the preceding Late Gulf Formational Period. However, it is marked by the presence of Dunlop fabric impressed pottery on the Gulf Coast. Also, Deptford/Cartersville simple stamped and Cartersville check stamped ceramics were later added to the ceramic inventory; these ceramic types continue into the Middle Woodland Period. Diagnostic stone spear/arrow points of this period include small stemmed Thelma and large triangular Yadkin points. These point types also continue into the Middle Woodland Period.

The Deptford ceramics dominate the assemblages from Early and Middle Woodland sites in Southern Alabama. Deptford ceramics generally consist of check stamped and simple stamped sand tempered ceramics, many of which have podal supports. More extensive investigations on the Atlantic Coast and on interior Cartersville and Cobb Swamp sites have suggested that large village sites, some with

elaborate burial mounds, and small hamlet/base camps dominated the settlement patterns in South Alabama.

### *Middle Woodland*

The Middle Woodland Period saw the continuation of the Deptford/Cartersville series ceramics with the addition of Swift Creek ceramics. Swift Creek ceramics exhibit distinctive curvilinear design elements that were applied to the vessel by well-executed stamping. Diagnostic spear/arrow points associated with Swift Creek include Jack's Reef and small stemmed and triangular points. The settlement and subsistence practices of the Swift Creek Culture would seem to be directly related to the earlier Deptford Cultures. Ceremonial activities during this period, which may have involved the ritual exchange of goods, came to rely less on exotic objects imported from the north and more on items produced locally (Braley and Mitchelson 1984:14).

### *Late Woodland*

The Late Woodland Period includes the Late Swift Creek and Weeden Island Phases. Complicated stamping continued to be the dominant ceramic design motif. Many of the Weeden Island and Swift Creek vessels found in the Fort Rucker area may have been produced in other areas and imported for trade. Willey and Woodbury (1942) originally divided the Weeden Island Period into two phases: Weeden Island I and II. The Weeden Island I Phase was defined by the presence of complicated stamped pottery, plain ceramics, and incised and punctated vessels (Braley and Mitchelson 1984:14). The Weeden Island II Phase has been defined by the presence of a new form of pottery, Wakulla check stamped.

The settlement patterns of Weeden Island sites closely resemble those of Middle Woodland cultures. However, there is an increased emphasis on mortuary ritual, with elaborately decorated ceramics being included with other, exotic grave goods. Also, the pressure from increased population may have resulted in larger aggregate villages and ceremonial centers. A Weeden Island mound excavated by

Moore (1918:529) at the McLaney site near Fort Rucker produced elaborate Weeden Island ceramics (Braley and Mitchelson 1984:15).

With the exception of Late Woodland occupations, the Woodland Period is poorly represented at Fort Rucker. Early and Middle Woodland Period sites together constitute only 13 per cent of all datable prehistoric sites on the Fort. While some of these sites can be definitely attributed to a distinct cultural period, many of them have produced only ambiguous artifacts that can be associated with two or more of the defined sub-periods. These sites have been identified as Unknown Woodland. The locations of the ten identified Early and Middle Woodland sites are displayed in Figure 5. No pattern can be discerned from the locations of these sites and their relationships to drainages and/or other sites. Unless future investigations identify additional Early and Middle Woodland sites, little useful information on settlement organization can be discerned from these resources. Similarly, Unidentified Woodland occupations, unless further refined in terms of occupation date, can add little to our general knowledge of settlement organization. Intra-site organization may be deduced from these sites if adequate buried cultural deposits are present. However, only two NRHP eligible sites (1Da47 and 1Da168) have produced intact buried cultural deposits that contain Early and Middle Woodland artifacts. Until additional sites in the region dating to the Early and Middle Woodland Periods are located, settlement studies will be restricted in scope and may be reduced simply to intra-site organization or comparisons between cultural periods.

Fourteen sites have been identified on Fort Rucker that have components dating to the Late Woodland Period. This represents approximately 18 per cent of all datable prehistoric archaeological sites, and five per cent of all identified sites on Fort Rucker. In many ways, the Late Woodland Period is closely related to the Mississippian Period which succeeds it in terms of ceramic production, settlement, etc. The plain sand-tempered ceramics which occur in one period often occur in the other. Thus, it is often impossible to discern between these two cultural periods.

The Late Woodland Period at Fort Rucker is represented primarily by small scatters of chipped stone and pottery fragments. Geographic locations of Late Woodland sites vary, with most being located adjacent to large (Claybank Creek) and

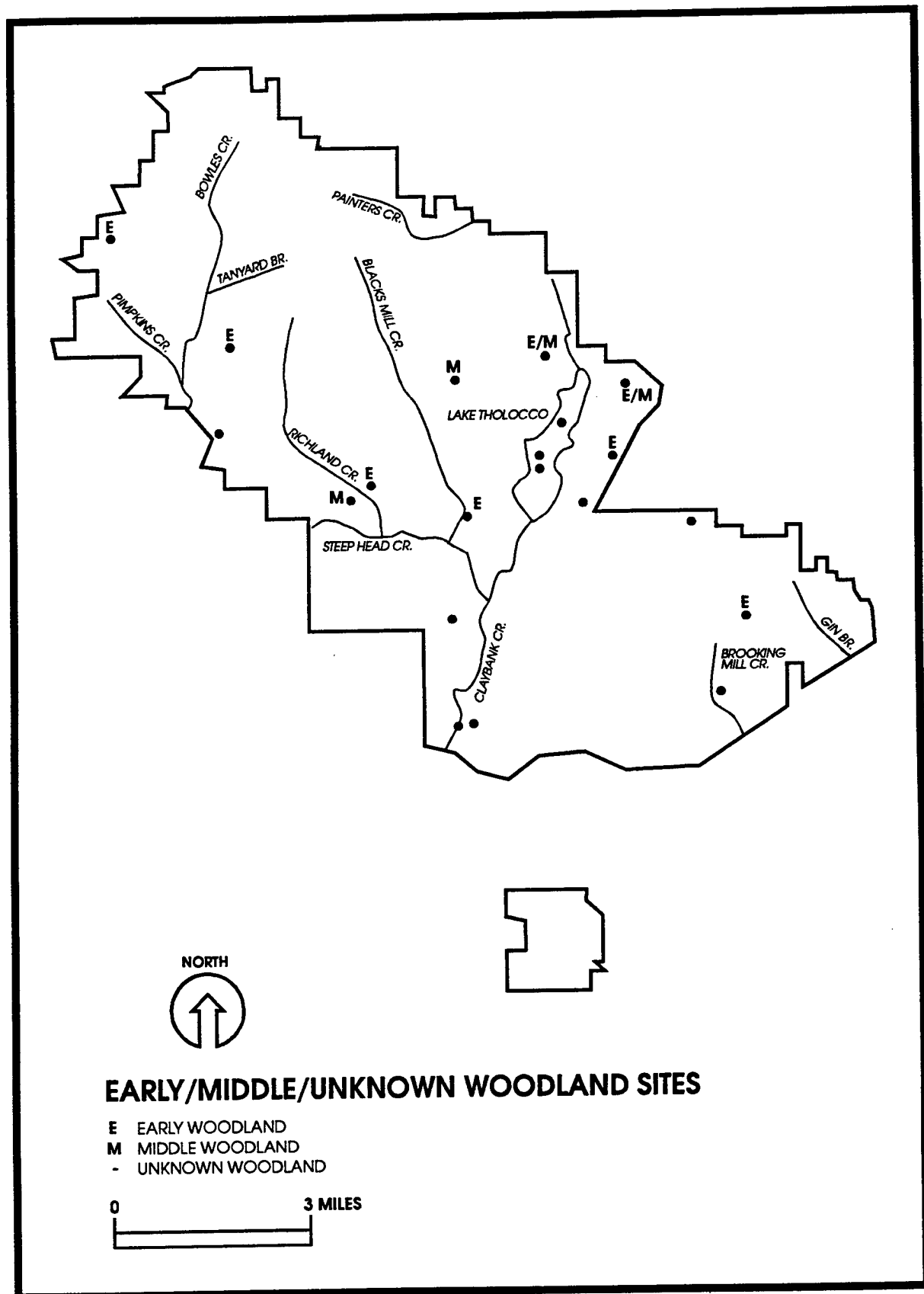


Figure 5. The Distribution of Early, Middle, and Unknown Woodland Sites at Fort Rucker.

small (Painters Creek, Steep Head Creek) drainages that drain the Fort. However, a small grouping of Late Woodland sites occurs approximately 2.0 km northwest of Lake Tholocco (Figure 6). The reason for this is unknown since no drainages are in the immediate vicinity. Future research into the nature of Late Woodland sites may shed light on the settlement patterns of these populations. Two NRHP eligible sites contain Late Woodland components on Fort Rucker (1Da43 and 1Da45). These sites represent large scatters of chipped stone and ceramic artifacts. Given that these sites contain buried, and possibly stratified deposits, future research into the nature of these sites may provide valuable information on the settlement and subsistence practices of Late Woodland populations.

### **The Mississippian Period**

Significant changes in the subsistence base and social order of southeastern Indians characterize the Mississippian Period. Settlements became large and more permanent throughout the eastern United States, and often contained plazas and temple mounds. Many decorative motifs from this period span the eastern region, and have been termed, collectively, the Southern Cult. Southern Cult items include embossed copper plates, conch shell gorgets, and elaborate flint blades or maces. The archaeological remains from this period indicate a powerful and elaborate political/religious organization.

Scholars have offered differing theories as to which cultures occupied southeast Alabama during the Mississippian Period. Previous researchers at Fort Rucker have included the Fort Rucker region within the sphere of the Fort Walton Culture (Braley and Mitchelson 1984; Braley and Misner 1986). The Fort Walton and Pensacola cultures of northwest Florida overlap to some extent and various aspects of these cultures may be expected within the project area. The region now encompassed by Fort Rucker is on the northern periphery of the influence of the Fort Walton and Pensacola cultural spheres. However, similar cultural adaptations may be seen in the Chattahoochee River Valley east of Fort Rucker (see below).

The Fort Walton cultural sphere has been defined, and redefined, by researchers over the past two decades (Braley and Mitchelson 1984; Milanich and





Fairbanks 1980; Schnell 1981; Sears 1977). The consensus now is that the Fort Walton Culture extended from the Apalachicola River drainage east to the Aucilla River (Milanich and Fairbanks 1980:193). Although the Fort Walton Culture was adapted primarily to coastal environments, there is some indication that cultural traits associated with the Fort Walton Culture may be seen as far north as the Gulf Coastal Plain of Alabama and Georgia, including the Fort Rucker area (Braley and Mitchelson 1984:16). For a more detailed discussion of Fort Walton cultural influences at Fort Rucker, see Braley and Mitchelson (1984).

The settlement systems of Mississippian populations may be divided into three broad categories: riverine, interior, and coastal (Braley and Mitchelson 1984:15; Brose and Percy 1978). Riverine settlement patterns are usually associated with large single mound ceremonial centers and small campsites located between the large ceremonial centers. Most of these sites are found on levees, swamp hammocks, and valley rims (Braley and Mitchelson 1984:16). The interior type of settlement is represented by small, dispersed sites, which may represent small farmsteads (Brose and Percy 1978:100). The coastal settlement pattern includes a narrowly focused subsistence system tied to coastal resources. A major ceremonial center at the Bottle Creek Site (Mobile Bay) may have served as the hub of coastal Florida and Alabama Mississippian settlement (Brose and Percy 1978).

Like the other major eras, the Mississippian has been divided into three sub-periods or phases: Early, Middle, and Late. The Fort Rucker area appears to be occupied by Mississippian cultures similar to those evident in the Chattahoochee River valley to the east. Each phase is described below.

### *Early Mississippian*

The first phase, a probable Late Woodland-Early Mississippian transition known as the Averett Phase (AD 850-1050), was defined based on artifacts recovered from sites at Fort Benning (Chase 1959, 1963). Described by Schnell (1975:34) as "a curious, rather isolated cultural manifestation," the Averett Phase is focused within the Fall Line Hills (Hally and Rudolph 1986:35; Schnell 1970). Averett ceramics are defined as

"plain, hard fine grit-tempered pottery whose primary embellishments are a series of nodes on the shoulders of some bowls [Chase 1963:49]. Two subtypes, Averett Incised and Averett Brushed, are also recognized [Chase 1959]" (Gresham et al. 1985:25).

The Averett Culture in the upper Gulf Coastal Plain may have functioned as a buffer between the Etowah Culture to the north and the slightly later Rood Phase cultures to the south. The overlap in Averett and Rood date ranges may reflect this relationship (Benson and Gresham 1994:15).

### *Middle Mississippian*

By AD 950, the Rood Phase had developed in the Upper Gulf Coastal Plain. The Rood Phase was first recognized at Rood Landing (9Sw1 - see Caldwell 1955). More recent knowledge about the Rood Phase is based on excavations at Cemochechobee (Schnell et al. 1981). This phase does not exhibit any clear links with its probable predecessor (late Weeden Island), and a transitional phase has not been defined. The phase is described by Schnell et al. (1981:241-242):

The Rood Phase is essentially a Middle Mississippian manifestation, as Griffin (1967) has used the term. It includes shell-tempered pottery, handled jars, hooded bottles, fortified, nucleated villages, a hierarchical settlement system, a distinctive platform mound ceremonialism, extended burials with grave goods, and quadrilateral wall trench structures.

Schnell et al. (1981) have emphasized vessel form over temper in an attempt to clarify confusion over Rood Phase ceramic assemblages. Based on excavations at Cemochechobee, Lake Jackson Decorated (incised) and Columbia Incised wares have been defined as primary ceramic types attributable to Rood Phase occupations. Minor types include Andrews Plain, Andrews Decorated (incised), Nunnally Incised, and Ingram Plain. Typical Rood Phase vessels are described as "plain, grit-tempered,

globular collared jars... frequently the collars are embellished with strap handles" (Gresham et al. 1985:25).

The contemporary phases from adjacent areas suggest that these cultural traditions came from the outside, and were not an *in situ* development (Schnell et al. 1981). The earliest Rood Phase settlements may represent expanding chiefdoms from other areas within Alabama, settling relatively uncontested territories to the east around AD 900 (Schnell et al. 1981:244-245).

### *Late Mississippian*

Change occurred gradually between the Middle and Late Mississippian sub-periods. By AD 1400, the transition from the Rood Phase to the subsequent Bull Creek Phase was sufficiently advanced to allow a distinction between the two (Knight 1979). One aspect of this change may have been a shift in the location of the major mound center from Rood Creek Landing (Rood Phase) to the Singer site (Bull Creek Phase - see Williams and Shapiro 1990). Ceramics recovered from Bull Creek contexts include Lamar Complicated Stamped, Lamar Plain, and Mercier Check Stamped. Rim elaborations take the form of rim pinching or nodding; reed punctating is rare (Schnell 1990).

Relatively little is known about Bull Creek settlement and subsistence. However, there is evidence of maize agriculture, large villages with platform mounds supporting very large structures, and again numerous small sites of the general "farmstead" class. The latter type of site is numerous within the Lower Chattahoochee River Valley to the east (Southerlin et al. 1995:21).

Overall, the Mississippian Period is not well represented on Fort Rucker, with components at only seven sites (see Figure 6). A possible Mississippian mound exists below Fort Rucker (see Braley and Misner 1986:15), although the age of this mound has not been verified. Braley and Mitchelson, during their 1984 survey of Fort Rucker, recorded only two sites with verifiable Fort Walton type ceramics, while only five sites produced Mississippian Triangular points. As noted by Braley and Misner (1986), plain sand tempered ceramics dominate Mississippian Period assemblages

during the Rood Phase in the Chattahoochee River Valley. Although such decorations or utilities as handles (often looped), effigies, and notched rims are present on these ceramics, many do not possess these attributes. It is possible that Late Woodland and Mississippian ceramics have often been miscategorized, given that a positive means of dating the sites which produced these plain wares does not exist. As such, and given the expected density of Mississippian Period sites on the Gulf Coastal Plain of Alabama (Braley and Misner 1984:15), it is possible that more Mississippian Period sites are present than have been recorded.

The small number of Mississippian sites generally precludes any assessment of their distribution in terms of land use within Fort Rucker, though it does suggest that the Mississippian use of this part of the Gulf Coastal Plain was extremely limited. Mississippian sites account for approximately 11 per cent of all datable prehistoric sites and three per cent of all identified sites on Fort Rucker. Only one of these sites (1Da45) is NRHP eligible. Thus, the number of intact Mississippian sites at Fort Rucker is extremely low. Until the ceramics from Late Woodland and Mississippian components can be better separated, little information regarding the settlement systems of Mississippian populations will be available.

The largest group of prehistoric sites identified at Fort Rucker consist of lithic debris that have no diagnostic artifacts. Approximately 73 per cent of all identified sites (203 of 277) contain just lithic artifacts. These sites cannot be assigned to a specific time period, nor do they appear to represent a single activity. Presumably, they are the residue of particular sets of activities which produce only lithic debris. It is possible that these sites represent places to gather resources and then leave; however, other functions (e.g., resource processing sites, extremely short term camps, etc.) cannot be ruled out.

Figure 7 presents the distribution of Unknown Prehistoric sites on Fort Rucker. Examination of the distribution of these sites within the Fort suggests a closer correlation with Middle and Late Archaic sites than with any other occupational period. It is unknown at present whether the lack of diagnostic artifacts on these sites is a result of differing site use (base camp or extraction locale) or differing resource utilization (expedient tool use or formal tool production). Many of the Unknown Prehistoric components within known sites may be attributed to the

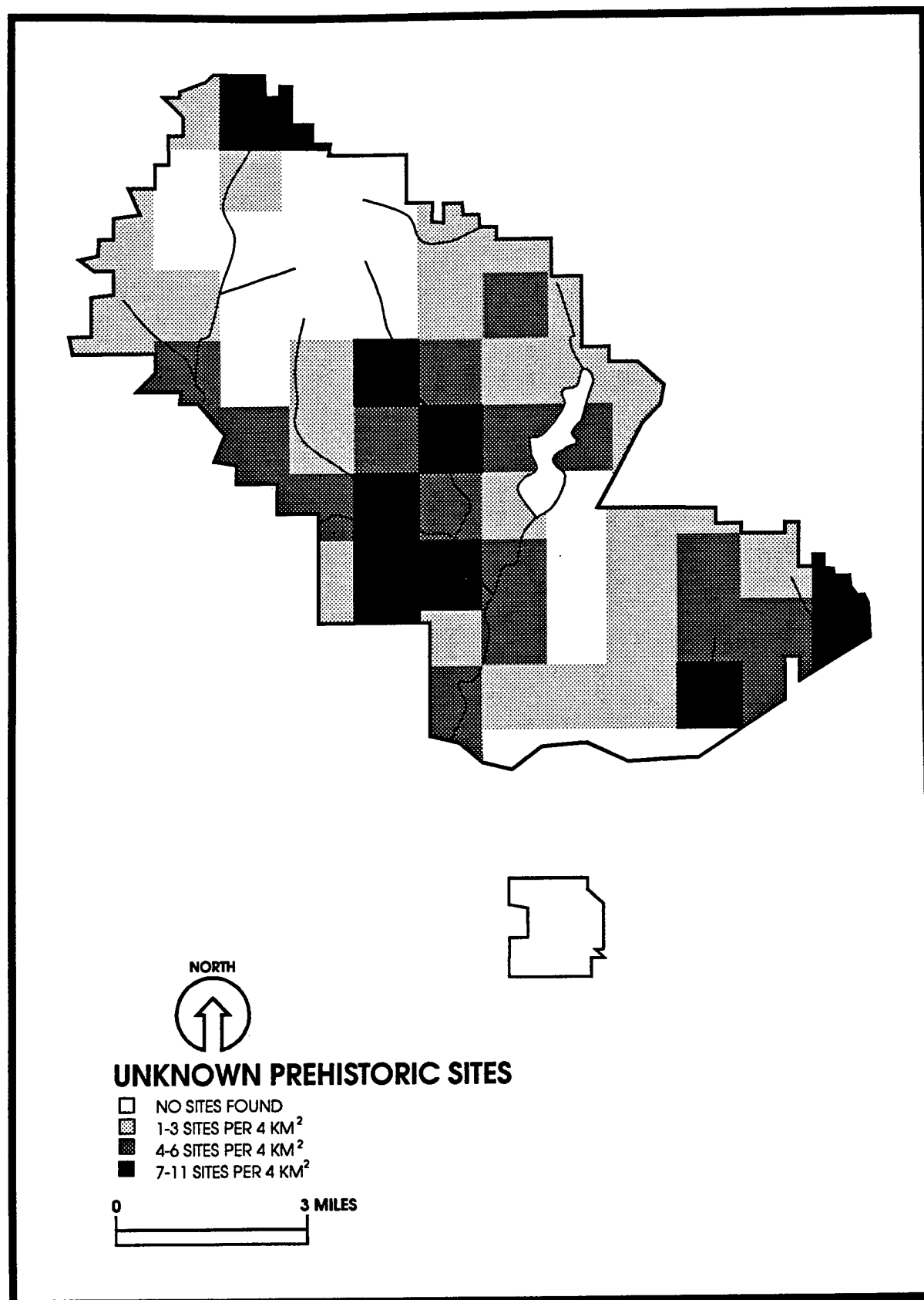


Figure 7. The Distribution of Unknown Prehistoric Sites at Fort Rucker.

known components of these sites; however, further research into the nature of these resources will be required before this can be verified.

The densest aggregate of Unknown Prehistoric sites appears just west of Lake Tholocco, near Black Mill Creek. Apparently, these sites may represent components of the Middle and Late Archaic settlement system. This pattern also sets the stage for early American occupation, which in the early years of the nineteenth century focused on this area.

## Chapter IV. Pre-Federal Occupation of Fort Rucker

### Introduction

Fort Rucker straddles two counties in southeastern Alabama. The eastern 2/3 of the fort is in Dale County, while the western 1/3 is in Coffee County. Dale County was formed in 1824 from the eastern portion of Covington County and the western portion of Henry County. Dale County was extended farther into Henry County in 1840; its western part was split again in 1841 to form Coffee County. The names of the counties came from prominent early settlers. Sam Dale was an Indian trader who helped to lead a successful attack on Creek forces in 1812, and who was elected to the first state legislature in 1819. John Coffee was a Virginia native who migrated to Tennessee and fought under Andrew Jackson in the Creek War of 1813-1814; he served as surveyor for the territory, then state, of Alabama.

These two counties date to the antebellum era of the early and middle nineteenth century, when intensive settlement began. This land had been under the control of the powerful Creek Confederacy until the 1810s, when Creeks throughout the southeastern United States were routed, and their territories acquired by land-hungry American settlers, principally from the Carolinas and Georgia. The tide of American settlement surged westward in the early nineteenth century, and eventually some streams of people began diverting into southeastern Alabama. This area has remained until the early twentieth century a relatively isolated area of small farms and low population density.

Their prehistory played a subtle yet influential role in shaping Dale and Coffee Counties throughout the nineteenth century. The relatively late settlement of the area was due in part to the fact that Native Americans had used the area so sparsely; Indian traders in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had little to attract them to the area. When American settlers did begin to purchase property in the area, they did so first in the areas that prehistoric occupants had used, particularly plots to the west of Claybank Creek, northwest of what is now Lake Tholocco. This allows later historians to sense more completely the continuities in



human occupation in the area, and the power of legacies to shape current land use practices.

### Proto-History and Early Contact

Spanish explorers in the early sixteenth century were the first Europeans to contact Native Americans in what is now Alabama. These natives were members of the Muskogean linguistic family which had spread throughout the southeastern United States. These groups would have been defined as Late Mississippian on the basis of their material culture. These branches of the Muskogean group in the Alabama developed into the powerful Creek Confederacy by the eighteenth century. During the early contact period the "confederation" grew into Upper and Lower Creeks; the Lower Creeks had major towns near present-day Columbus, Georgia, and Phenix City, Alabama. While no Historic Native American archaeological sites have been found as of 1979, and recent maps which seek to document Indian trails through the state fail to indicate any in the survey area, Indian wars continued to be fought near the survey area into the 1820s and 1830s (Rogers et al. 1994:16). Clearly, however, the area was not a point of extensive contact by comparison to the central part of the state and the immediate Gulf Coast.

The early European explorations apparently came near Fort Rucker without entering it. Panfilo de Narvaez grazed the Florida and Alabama coast in 1527 before disappearing at sea; he had sought to establish a colony in Florida in Apalachee territory, but when faced with continual opposition he headed south to the Gulf Coast and sailed to Mobile Bay. Hernando de Soto during his *entrada* (1539-1542) came close to but did not enter the Fort Rucker area. While his exact route is a matter of some contention, he apparently headed north from Tampa Bay through Georgia and South Carolina, and into the Blue Ridge Mountains. He then swung south again into Alabama following the Coosa River, down to the now-unknown Mabila, where his forces barely survived an ambush in late 1539. He then led his forces to the northwest into Mississippi and Arkansas. The last significant Spanish presence in Alabama came in 1559, when Don Tristan de Luna failed in his attempt to establish a colony at Mobile.

The next attempts at settlement in the Gulf Coast area came over a century later with the French. This began a period of complicated diplomatic moves between the French, Spanish, English, Americans, and various tribes of the Creek Confederacy regarding use of the Alabama territory. France had established a strong position in Canada by the early seventeenth century, and quickly began sending explorers west to the Great Lakes. The French sought a stronger strategic position in North America by encircling the English colonies along the eastern seaboard, and French Canadian explorers traveled down the Mississippi River to the Gulf Coast at the end of the seventeenth century. What is now Biloxi, Mississippi became the first French fort on the Gulf Coast in 1699. These French settlers sought to be closer to the English and Indian trade, though, and established a new fort, Port Dauphin, north of what is now the city of Mobile, in 1702; the village of La Mobile which accompanied the fort was laid out on a grid pattern within the year. The French had moved their city south to what is now the location of Mobile by 1711, which was also laid out on a grid plan (Gould 1988; Rogers et al. 1994).

### **British Rule and the American Revolution**

French control of the Gulf Coast ended in 1763 at the Treaty of Paris, which formally acknowledged Britain's victory in the French and Indian (Seven Years) War. The Treaty granted Spain title to New Orleans and the territory west of the Mississippi River, while Great Britain gained Canada and the Gulf Coast east of the Mississippi, including Florida. The Treaty included cessions of Native American lands without the consent of the affected tribes. The lone concession to a Native American presence in the territory was Britain's Proclamation of 1763, which forbade settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains and south to the 31st parallel (the present border between Alabama and Florida). In effect, this policy bought time by limiting, though certainly not halting, invasions of Indian lands by European and American traders and settlers. The treaties that were worked out with the Indians, and the pattern of settlement which focused on the coastal areas, limited conflicts with Indians in the interior.

The colony began to show signs of prospering under British rule after 1763. Agricultural yields improved and population increased, and the colony began moving

toward self-sufficiency (Rogers et. al. 1994: 31-35). Britain's rule, however successful it seemed at the time, was short-lived. Spain belatedly joined forces with the American rebels during the American Revolution, and as a result, Spanish forces under Bernardo de Galvez captured Mobile in early 1780, and Pensacola in 1781. As a result, one historian noted, "Spain now controlled the Gulf Coast outlets for the Mississippi, Alabama, and Chattahoochee rivers, a situation that would prove intolerable for the new American nation" (Rogers et al. 1994:37).

### **Indian Wars and Early White Settlement**

The Treaty of Paris (1783) concluded the Revolutionary War and gave Spain control of the Gulf Coast. The boundaries for the three claimants to the interior territory, Spanish, American, and Creek, however, were unclear. Officially, Spain's northern border was set in the Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1795 as the 31st parallel, with the state of Georgia as its northern neighbor. The American government established the Mississippi Territory in 1798 under the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance. The land was surveyed under the Federal Land Ordinance, which resulted in a precise, rectilinear pattern of survey tracts. All of these negotiations were carried on without consulting the third claimant, the Creeks, who continued to constitute both a potent enemy and a pawn in complex international diplomacy. While Spanish leaders in Mobile sought to turn the Creeks to their own side, the Creeks sought to continue their trading relations with the British. As Georgia settlers began moving into the Mississippi territory, particularly the central parts, in the early nineteenth century, tensions with the Creeks flared up.

Despite these uncertainties, American settlers began streaming into the new Mississippi Territory. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803, in which the United States acquired both the crucial port city of New Orleans and the vast Louisiana Territory, acted as a powerful attraction for settlers. Such a powerful market outlet as the Mississippi River and its tributaries, and an established port city, turned the "black belt" of central Mississippi and Alabama into prime, and highly desirable, agricultural lands. The Mississippi River, now clearly in American hands, also acted as a conduit for new settlers. Two results of this seem worth noting. In light of the growing number of settlers to the Mississippi Territory, and the nation's new port city of New

Orleans, President Jefferson ordered the construction of a federal road from Washington, DC to New Orleans. Like the Spanish explorers 200 years earlier, the Federal Road skirted the immediate Fort Rucker area, passing to the north through what is now Columbus, Georgia, west to the Tallapoosa River, and then following the Alabama River southwest to Mobile. This facilitated greater settlement in the Tombigbee and Alabama River valleys as well as in Mississippi, but bypassed southeastern Alabama. With a limited Native American presence attracting few traders, only few of the Americans heading to the new southwest were inclined to come to southeastern Alabama in the early nineteenth century. Also, settlement in this new southwestern territory began largely from the west as settlers moved in from the Mississippi River and along the Natchez Trace road from Tennessee into the Mississippi Territory. As a consequence, Mississippi gained its statehood in 1817, while its eastern portion became the Alabama territory at the same time.

While the Federal Road had little direct impact on the survey area, it did increase contact between white settlers and the Creeks in the Alabama territory generally; as one historian (Roberts 1969:163) has noted, "the movement of squatters into the territory produced the tensions that prompted the Creek Indians to resort to acts of violence, [and] the men who led military forces to crush these Indians were men who knew the values to be derived from Creek lands." Tensions reached a critical point by 1813, when a series of attacks and counterattacks blossomed into a war throughout the Mississippi Territory. The war was brought to a formal, and violent, end in 1814 with Andrew Jackson's victory at Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River. No battles, at least none that have entered the historical record, were fought in the Fort Rucker area, but the end of the Creek War officially opened southeastern Alabama to settlement. In the aftermath of the war, Jackson acted as commissioner for the United States, and forced the cession of 23,000,000 acres of Creek lands to the United States; 14,000,000 of these acres lay in what is now Alabama. Further negotiations with Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee representatives secured more lands along the Tennessee River in 1816. These lands were surveyed in 1816 and 1817, and sales of land in the northern part of the Alabama Territory began in 1817 (Roberts 1969). Following the war, "Alabama fever" gripped the nation, and during the 1810s the population of Alabama grew more than 1,000 per cent. In 1820 the population was 127,901; by 1830, this had risen to 309,527 (Rogers et al 1994:54).

Mississippi became a state in 1817, and the new territory of Alabama which remained soon formed Conecuh County in 1818. This was a massive county encompassing the entire southeastern portion of the territory, bordered by Georgia and Florida. On the eve of becoming a state in 1819, the Alabama territory divided Conecuh County into six new counties; one of these, Henry County, covered what is now Dale, Coffee, Geneva, and Houston Counties. It was a large, and largely unpopulated, county. Most of the Creeks who had lived in the area had been killed in the recent Creek War, particularly at the battle at Horseshoe Bend; those that remained represented a threat to the new settlers (Watson 1970).

McGee (1989) supports the contention that a lack of permanent Native settlements in the area limited its attractiveness to white settlers before the War of 1812. White settlers began entering the area in greater numbers only after Andrew Jackson's campaigns against the Seminoles and the Spanish in Florida from 1815 to 1817. A number of men and boys had traveled west from the Carolinas and Georgia to join Jackson's forces, and blazed trails through the area. Many of them either chose to stay in the largely uninhabited area, or were unable to afford to get back. One result of this early pattern of occupation was that the succeeding settlers were often from the Carolinas and Georgia, families and friends of the earliest settlers.

These settlers were living in the area without legal title to the land through the early 1820s. Alabama became a state in 1819, and the southeastern part of the state was not surveyed by the Federal government until 1822 and 1823. These surveys, many of them conducted by John Coffee and Samuel Pearman, were carried out under the auspices of the Federal land ordinance concerning new territories, which called for townships of six square miles each, divided initially into thirty-six sections of 640 acres each. These sections were then broken into quarter sections of 160 acres and quarter-quarter sections of forty acres. The Federal government then gave one section to the state for public institutions, and sold the remaining sections to individuals. Individual purchases were generally for the smaller quarter-quarter sections or quarter sections.

Federal land sales in the state were recorded in the Alabama Tract Books, now housed at the Alabama Department of Archives and History (Hahn 1983). These Books show slow sales in the Fort Rucker area through the 1820s, though they

increased significantly in the 1830s. In particular, there were bursts of sales in 1836 and 1838. Land sales in this area were particularly heavy in the 1830s through the 1850s; land sales east of Claybank Creek, however, continued sluggish throughout the antebellum years. While land purchases in the original Dale County began in the middle 1820s, Isaac Ledbetter made the first recorded purchase of land in what is now Fort Rucker. He purchased a lot in October, 1828 in Township 5 North Section 14 of Range 23 East; this was approximately at the northern end of what is now Lake Tholocco, just west of what had been Claybank Creek. Ledbetter also purchased several tracts south of Fort Rucker, still in Dale County. Meanwhile, the first recorded public land transaction in what is now Coffee County was in January, 1824, when William Stapleton purchased a tract of land in what is now eastern Coffee County. The bulk of these land purchases were made in the 1830s and 1840s when many families in South Carolina and Georgia sought to leave depleted cotton fields for new areas to the west. However, the Federal Government continued to sell original titles to a significant number of tracts in the region into the 1890s and early 1900s. While portions of the Fort Rucker area in both Dale and Coffee Counties continued to be sold into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, more tracts in eastern Coffee County were sold at these late dates.

Settlers continued to enter the new Dale County through the 1820s. The earliest settlements are easiest to trace in Dale rather than in Coffee County, and provide a glimpse of early settlement patterns. Within the Fort Rucker area, the principal early focus was on the triangle of land formed by Blacks Mill Creek, Claybank Creek, and Painter's Creek, along with their drainages to the south. This apparently was a sensible place to settle, as prehistoric Native Americans had occupied the same area, according to recent archaeological surveys (see Chapter III). Elisha Matthews and his new wife, Lacy Dowling, arrived in Dale County from Darlington District, South Carolina in 1824; their respective parents, all substantial farmers in South Carolina, followed them to the area in 1825. The Reverend Dowling Dempsey, Lacy's father, eventually settled southwest of Ozark along Hurricane Creek, just outside of Fort Rucker. Some settlers came from North Carolina, such as Redding Byrd and his large family, who arrived in Dale County in 1828. After a one month trip, they first settled southeast of Ozark, then moved to a plot one mile east of Ozark. They sold their property in 1833 to the Carroll family, also from North Carolina.

Other early settlers in Dale County included Samuel Pearman, who served as a Federal surveyor and also operated a ferry across the Pea River in the northern part of the county, Obediah Dick who likewise operated a ferry across the Choctawhatchee River at the Block House settlement, Isaac Ledbetter and his sons who operated a store in various places in the area, and John Kimmey who also operated a store in what is now Daleville. Indeed, the state legislature selected "Kimmey's Store" as the location for a new county seat in 1827; it was first named Dale Court House (Figure 8), and later renamed Daleville (McGee 1989:8-15).

Several small settlements arose in the early 1820s, including Block House, a fortified community around a log structure with portholes, astride the Choctawhatchee River approximately two miles east of Fort Rucker. This also became the site of a ferry across the river, which allowed for easier settlement of western Dale County and Coffee County. What is now Ozark was settled in the early 1820s as well, first by Allen Cooley and his family, who were South Carolina natives, then in 1822 by John Merrick, Sr., who followed Cooley's trail from Louisville. The most recent history of Coffee County (Watson 1970) records no communities in the western portion of Dale County before the 1830s.

The area was affected by settlers from the Carolinas in other ways as well, as they brought with them often damaging agricultural practices that would have effects lingering into the twentieth century. The agricultural practices in the North and South Carolina Piedmont and inner coastal plain, whence many of Dale and Coffee County came, featured extensive rather than intensive cultivation. With a relative abundance of land and with labor relatively dear, planters tended to clear large tracts of land and plant extensively in crops that required relatively little upkeep, such as cotton. This was a highly erosive practice which depleted the soil quickly. When the soil of a particular area was spent, these farmers tended to move west to find more fertile land; this gave the additional impetus to "Alabama fever" in the 1810s. As the settlers moved into a new area, they generally continued the same practice; as Trimble (1974:41) has noted, "Abandonment of fields with little or no vegetative cover was one of the most erosive practices of the European settlement." Even though Coffee and Dale Counties did not have the vast plantations of the Black Belt, the farming practices were similar, and had a strong impact on the land into the twentieth century.

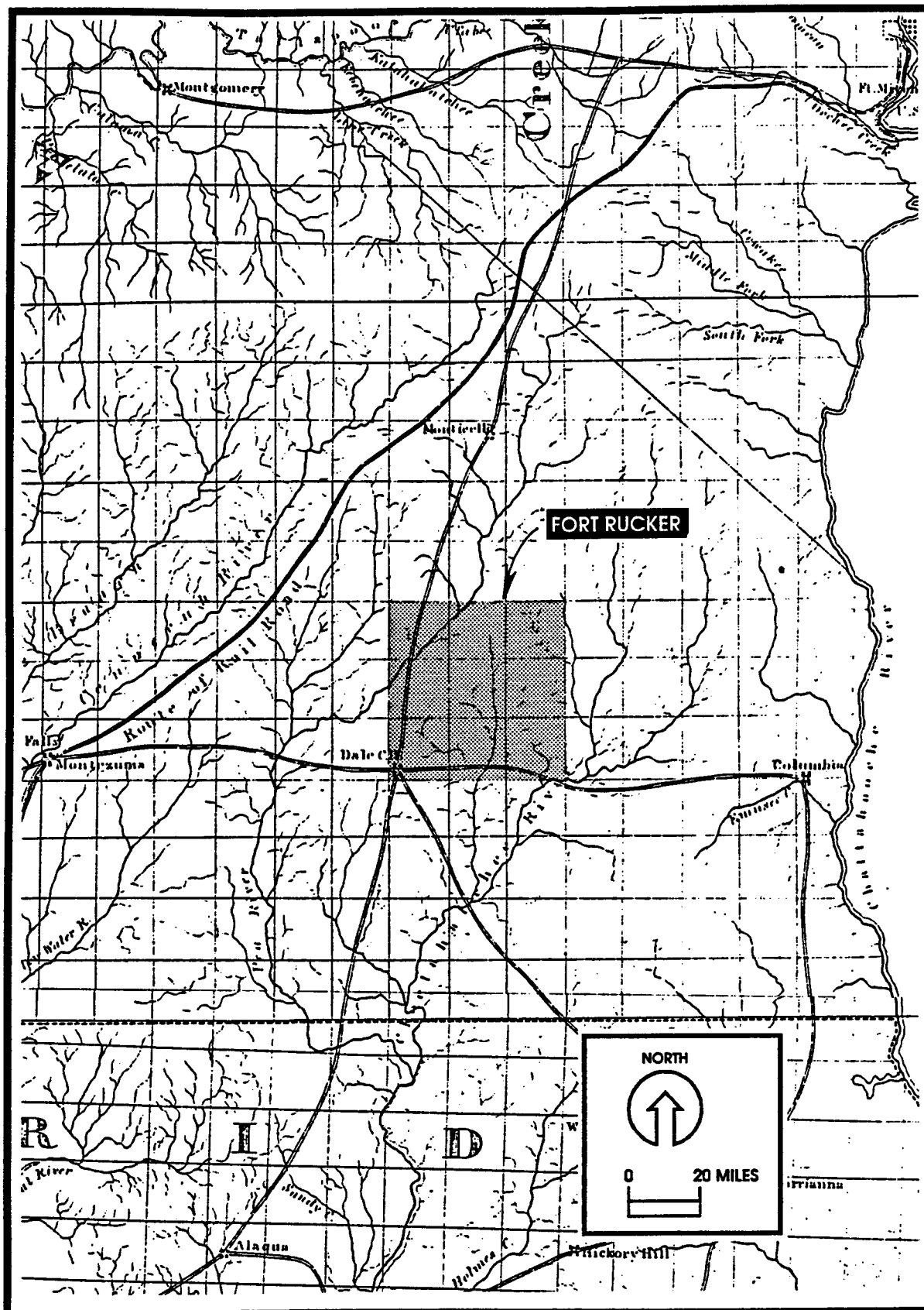


Figure 8. "A Map Shewing [sic] the Route of the Proposed Columbus and Pensacola Rail Road" (1836, Alabama Department of Archives and History).



A lack of adequate transportation hindered settlement in the region. Maps from this era indicate few roads through the area. There is no evidence of significant Indian trails through the Fort Rucker area, while the Federal Road from Washington, DC, to New Orleans, which Congress authorized in 1806, passed well to the north and west (Rogers et al. 1994:16; Southerland and Brown 1989:48). Recent historians indicate an "Improved Road of 1819" which passes through the Fort Rucker area, and contemporary maps housed in the Alabama Department of Archives and History indicate other small roads. An 1836 map of the route of the proposed, though never completed, Columbus & Pensacola Railroad indicates roads intersecting at Dale Court House, one from Montezuma in the west to Columbia in the east, the other from Monticello in the north to Alaquá, Florida, in the south (see Figure 8). An 1850 map shows no additional roads. Goods and people entering the area often arrived on the Choctawhatchee and Pea Rivers by way of pole boats. Burtis Byrd, the son of an early settler in Dale County, built the first bridge across the Choctawhatchee River at Newton in 1842, while Samuel Pearman's ferry crossed the Pea River in Coffee County in the 1830s, complementing the ferry across the Choctawhatchee at Block House. Meanwhile, a wooden bridge was built across the Pea in the early 1850s. These new roads increased the accessibility of the Fort Rucker area, but access to homesites was still challenging; such roads as existed were very rough, and most streams had no bridges. These transportation difficulties, combined with a lingering Indian presence and soils that were not as fertile as in central Alabama, made for relatively slow growth through the 1830s and 1840s.

### **Antebellum Era: Political and Economic**

Despite the difficulties of access, the population in southeastern Alabama grew to the point that new counties were needed. Conecuh County, created in 1818, was broken into Butler, Henry, and Conecuh Counties in 1819, when the state was formed. In 1821, Covington County was split off from the western portion of Henry County; in 1824, Dale County was formed from parts of Covington and Henry Counties. Coffee County was then formed from the western portion of Dale County in 1841. Dale Court House was created in 1830 as the county seat by act of the state legislature, on land near a store owned by John Kimmey; its name was soon changed to Daleville (McGee 1989). After Coffee County had been split off in 1841, the Dale

County seat was moved to Newton. Ozark, the present county seat of Dale County, began as a post office in 1843; originally named Woodshop, its name was changed in 1855.

Railroad and highway maps into the early twentieth century continued to show communities in or near the survey area, particularly in Dale County. These included Haw Ridge, Kleg, Crittenden's Mills, and Echols. These communities are shown in Figure 9. While many of Dale County's villages arose in the 1820s and 1830s, the Westville community arose during the early 1850s, and secured a post office in 1858, though it ceased to appear on maps by the early twentieth century. Haw Ridge lay four miles to the northwest of Westville, Daleville was nine miles to the south, while what became Ozark lay eight miles to the northeast. Mary Fleming, a woman who grew up in Dale County in the 1850s and 1860s, gave a valuable picture of life in the Westville community in her reminiscences written in 1902. She referred to Westville as a "thickly settled community," and during the Civil War years it served as a small merchant center with a store and small industries, where farmers could market their cotton (Fleming 1957:65; McGee 1989:31; Post Master of Westville 1858). Fleming recalled two schools before the Civil War in Dale County: one in Pleasant Hill and the other in Westville (Fleming 1957:84). She also observed that most of the settlers in the area, including her own family, came from Georgia, while a few others came from North Carolina. For some others, she noted, Westville was their second stop in Alabama, giving evidence of the intense geographic mobility of Alabama's early settlers in a constant search for new and better land.

Watson (1970:31-74) records several antebellum communities in Coffee County, though few have remained as incorporated villages. Wellborn, which was created as the county seat in 1845, was about 12 miles west of what is now Enterprise. It had been a point of settlement from the 1830s, and was named as the court house site in the act which created Coffee County, in honor of William Wellborn, an Indian War hero. Events moved slowly in Coffee County, however, and the court house and jail were not constructed until 1846. After the new courthouse burned in 1851, the county seat was moved to Elba, which was at the center of the county's population at the time and was the site of an early ferry over the Pea River in the 1830s. Indigo Head, now Clintonville, was created in 1845, though there are reports of settlers there as early as 1830. It gained a post office in 1849, when its



population was approximately 200, and served as a market center until the late 1890s, when the railroad passed it by; in Victorian America, this tended to be a death knell for traditional communities. What is now Victoria began as the settlement of Smut Eye, in the 1830s. Haw Ridge, which is within the present boundaries of Fort Rucker, was on the line between Dale and Coffee Counties. It was created in 1853, and was the site of a store and leather tannery. The buildings which comprised the old village were torn down in the early 1940s, when the US Army took over the area for use as Camp Rucker. These were all small communities throughout the antebellum era, with populations barely in the hundreds. Most of the populations of both counties, indeed, tended to live out on farms rather than in the towns.

No evidence of nineteenth century architecture in the Fort Rucker area has yet been found, although archaeological surveys have identified historic period architectural fragments on sites at Fort Rucker. The Braley and Mitchelson (1984) study, which identified every building shown on soil maps from the early twentieth century, is of limited value in determining the types of houses once located on Fort Rucker. The survey found no standing structures, though it did identify a number of architectural fragments. Window glass was the most heavily represented type; other isolated finds included brick fragments, a door knob, and different types of nails. These artifacts are significant for what they exclude, however. The absence of significant quantities of brick, combined with the presence of a variety of nails suggests that the bulk of the houses were of frame construction. Brick was a relatively expensive building material that would have been shipped into the area; its absence in quantities to suggest building material is not surprising given the occupation and location patterns in Coffee and Dale Counties.

It is expected, however, given the nature of settlement, population, and occupation patterns in southeastern Alabama that the occupants' houses were of vernacular designs in several guises. The most basic form of shelter for settlers who were settled on particular lots was the single-pen cottage. This was generally a timber frame building with a front entrance on the gable side, and with a chimney at one end. This simple house type was easily, and often, expanded into a double-pen cottage by adding a second pen beyond the side chimney. This resulted in a house with a more or less central chimney, and two front entrances along the side gable. The facade was only accidentally symmetrical. As the antebellum era wore

on these houses were copied, often using balloon-frame construction with pre-cut 2x4 boards instead of having a timber frame. This type of residence has been called a saddlebag cottage/house as well as double-pen. An even less formal version of this was the dogtrot house, in which the central passageway between the pens was not enclosed. The dogtrot house, one recent scholar (Gamble 1987:24) has observed, "was the dwelling house of the common man in antebellum America."

Other, more elaborate houses included the hall and parlor type. These were still small buildings, generally one or one and one-half stories, one room deep and two rooms wide. A single off-center front door along the gable side entered directly into a room without a central hallway. This house, like the single- and double-pen houses, could be easily expanded, generally with ells extending from the back. A more elaborate type of folk housing which may have been present in southeastern Alabama was the I cottage/house. Like the saddleback cottage, the I cottage tended to have two rooms on either side of a central passage. The I cottage differed in that it showed a Georgian/neo-classical influence in its planned symmetry and balance. I cottages generally had three or five bays across the front facade, with a side gable and end chimney(s). I cottages, like the more prestigious two-story I houses, could be ornamented with details from various styles, including Greek Revival and Gothic Revival. These were imposing houses, and tended to be more popular in rural areas, among more prosperous farmers, than in towns.

The Fort Rucker area throughout the antebellum era was populated primarily by small farmers, with few, but widely dispersed, black slaves. Much of the land in southeastern Alabama, often called the "piney woods" or "wiregrass" section, remained in Federal and State ownership. The land was sparsely settled, and ownership of land was widely diffused. In Coffee County, 46 per cent of the families owned their own land in 1850; by 1860, this had increased to 75 per cent. In 1830, the census records 274 slaves in Dale County, before Coffee County had been split off. By 1850, Dale County had 6,925 inhabitants, with 705 slaves. In Coffee County in 1850, the total population of 6,004 included only 513 slaves. Fewer than five households in each county showed more than 10 slaves. Moreover, these slaves tended to live in households with five or fewer slaves; in 1860 in Coffee County, nearly 62 per cent of slaveowners owned five or fewer slaves (Owsley 1949:162). In Dale County only 134 households out of 1,000+ households owned slaves; in Coffee

County, 111 households out of 900+ reported owning slaves. In 1850, the majority of Coffee County landowners, both slaveholding and nonslaveholding, owned fewer than 200 acres, though there was a significant minority of slaveowners who owned considerably more than that (Owsley 1949:157-61). It should be kept in mind that despite their relatively few numbers, slaveholders controlled much of the farm land, giving slavery a more prominent place in the county than the number of slaves represents. These data are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Landownership of the Total Agricultural, Slaveholding, and Non-Slaveholding Population: Coffee County, 1850 and 1860 (after Owsley 1949:158-161).**

Total Agricultural			
Year	Heads of Families Engaged in Agriculture	Percentage of Landowners	Percentage of Landless
1850	731	46.24	53.76
1860	1,116	75.27	24.73

Slaveholding			
Year	Heads of Families Engaged in Agriculture	Percentage of Landowners	Percentage of Landless
1850	133	67.67	32.33
1860	198	91.41	8.59

Non-Slaveholding			
Year	Heads of Families Engaged in Agriculture	Percentage of Landowners	Percentage of Landless
1850	598	41.47	58.53
1860	918	71.79	28.21

The census schedules for Coffee County also show a significant number of non-farming occupations, including merchants and various other skilled occupations (e.g. saddler, blacksmith, mechanic, lawyer, mason, teacher, and physician). A

historian of Dale County also reports a leather tanyard and several cotton gin operators (McGee 1989:18-20). The most common designation for occupation other than farmer, however, was laborer; this presumably represented farm laborers.

A recent historian has noted that during antebellum decades "Cotton dominated the economy of Alabama" (Rogers et al. 1994:95). Cotton was an important crop in southeastern Alabama before the Civil War, though perhaps not as crucial as in other parts of the state. The "wiregrass" and "piney woods" sections of eastern Alabama are not known for fertile agricultural soils, as are the "black belt" portions of central and northern Alabama. Farmers in Coffee and Dale Counties brought their cotton by wagon from town centers in the region to Eufala and Greenville, the nearest cotton markets; the wagons would then return with dry goods and groceries. The round trip could take five or six days (Fleming 1957:65). Farmers in the region seem to have practiced self-sufficient more than staple agriculture before the War, as one early resident of Dale County recalled planting corn and peas almost exclusively. While the survey area remained almost exclusively agricultural, there is some evidence that Coffee and Dale Counties may have had one textile factory each, though the extent and duration of these is unknown (Griffin 1956:209).

Livestock, particularly cattle and swine, were also an important part of the Fort Rucker area's economy. Indeed, Grady McWhiney, following in Frank Owsley's footsteps, stresses the vast livestock herds in the Alabama and Mississippi territories and states, and argues that livestock production was also an essential component of Alabama's antebellum economy (McWhiney 1978; Owsley 1949). Coffee County, according to a recent historian, has been called the "cow county," given that its plateaus proved ideal for cattle raising (Watson 1970:18). An early settler in Dale County recalled that in 1847, his second year of farming, he killed 3,000 pounds of pork (McGee 1989:25). The amount of livestock in the area also led to the creation of several tanyards and shoe "factories" as the more important local industries, which employed both slave and free labor (Fleming 1957:79).

## Civil War

Neither Dale nor Coffee Counties saw direct Civil War fighting, although both counties sent many men to war. Men from Coffee County were parts of companies in nine different infantry and cavalry regiments, while estimates for Dale County range from 1,200 to 2,000 citizens serving in the Confederate Army. Dale County men served principally in two regiments, the 15th Alabama which saw action in Virginia, at Chattanooga, and at Chickamauga, and the 33rd Alabama which fought primarily in the "west" (i.e., Tennessee and Kentucky). Other Dale County men were in the 7th Alabama, the 53rd Alabama Mounted Infantry, and the 57th Alabama Cavalry (McGee 1989:60-61; Watson 1970:227-28).

Mary Love Fleming (1957) in her 1902 reminiscences gave a lively description of the home front activities in Dale County during the Civil War. Family members who had long before forgotten how to spin and weave had to relearn these skills from older members, both to supply themselves and to send goods to the troops. Dale County citizens also turned away from what cotton they had produced before the War and turned more intensively to food crops, while most meat was sent to the Confederate Army. Residents raised and consumed a variety of fruits and vegetables, along with rice and sugar and sorghum cane (Fleming 1957:93). In addition, nearly every family felt the impact of a member going off to war, often when only boys. "Not a young man remained in our community," she noted, and nearly every family "lost one member at least by death in battle, or from wounds, or from sickness in camp and hospital" (Fleming 1957:91). She also noted, however, that Dale County was very far from the actual fighting.

Dale County's delegates to the Alabama secession convention in 1861 voted for immediate secession. Despite this sentiment among the leaders, both Dale and Coffee Counties had significant numbers of people opposed to the War. This reputation drew deserters and draft dodgers to the southern portion of Dale, Coffee, and Henry Counties; one group eventually formed a camp in northern Florida south of Geneva, Alabama, in 1862-1863, and sent raiding missions into the surrounding Alabama and Florida counties. The tensions erupted into open violence in a series of battles throughout 1863 and 1864. The closest that Coffee County came to the war itself was in late 1862, when Union troops from Pensacola commandeered the



steamboat "Bloomer," which was moored at the junction of the Choctawhatchee and Pea Rivers in Geneva.

### Reconstruction

Alabama suffered heavy losses of life and property in the Civil War, as the wreckage of burned buildings, destroyed foundries, and displaced railroad tracks littered the state. Farm acreage and output declined dramatically, while the new freedmen represented losses of both capital and a controllable labor supply. While these losses were not as great in Dale and Coffee Counties, where slaves were relatively few, it still represented a shift in the local labor supply and arrangements. The damage was greatest in north Alabama and in the Black Belt section in the center of the state.

The Fort Rucker area, though it was not in the direct path of fighting, still felt the effects of war. The population in Coffee County, for example, dropped from 9,623 in 1860 to 6,171 in 1870. Most of this decline can be attributed to people moving out of the county, heading off to Texas or even farther away, and not to war-time casualties. As Mary Fleming (1957:82) noted, "Our community began to change rapidly and for the worse for many of the better families sold their farms and moved to the towns and cities, or to more westerly states, especially Texas." Likewise, the schools declined after the War "because many of the families moved to Texas and to other western states" (Fleming 1957:87). The population of the two counties rebounded later in the century, however, and by 1890 over 12,000 people lived in the Coffee County; by 1900, the population was nearly 21,000 (Watson 1970:105). The Fort Rucker area also faced military occupation and political unrest during Reconstruction. Union Army soldiers camped on the courthouse square in Newton in 1866, while local elections were disrupted with the requirement of the "iron-clad oath" that an office-seeker had never supported the Confederacy.

Two political developments in the survey area deserve particular notice. Citizens in southern Coffee and Dale Counties began to chafe at being so far from the county seats in Elba and Newton, respectively; given the state of roads at the time, the distances of 30-40 miles to the courthouses was prohibitive for residents in

Geneva, which is close to the Florida border. The state legislature responded in late 1868 by creating Geneva County out of the lower portions of Dale and Coffee Counties. Several months later, in early 1869, the Dale County courthouse in Newton burned under suspicious circumstances. Debates over the location of Dale County's seat raged during the next year, and the Legislature called for a local election to decide the issue. The vote approving Ozark was contested in the courts, and was not ratified by the Legislature until early 1871.

### 1877-1920

The Fort Rucker area was still a remote part of the state in the early years after the Civil War. By the early twentieth century, however, a number of factors brought the area into greater contact with the outside world. After decades of emphasis on subsistence crops and livestock, Dale and Coffee Counties turned more intensively to cotton in the years after the Civil War; as one Coffee County farmer recalled in the early twentieth century, he had no market for watermelons, potatoes, and other crops, but could get money only for cotton. By 1915, the annual yield for Coffee County was 35,000 bales. Watson (1970) noted that "Cotton was king and the farmers knew little about growing anything but cotton. That was the only way they knew how to earn a living." This turn to staple agriculture tied the county more firmly into national market and credit networks, which in turn forced farmers into planting more cotton. The cycle was not broken until the 1910s, when the boll weevil invaded the area and dramatically cut cotton production. In response to the boll weevil, Coffee County planters turned to peanuts, along with a greater number of subsistence crops such as corn and potatoes, and hay for renewed herds of livestock. The changeover was rapid, as peanuts were the dominant crop in Coffee County by 1917.

The Fort Rucker area remained an isolated area of the state until the 1880s, when the first railroad came in. Travelers from Dale and Coffee Counties still took wagons to Eufala and Troy to catch trains. In the 1880s, however, transportation and communications developments cemented the area's ties to national markets and networks. Surveys for an extension of the Central Railroad from Eufala to Ozark began in late 1887. In the summer of 1888, the train reached Arifton in northern

Dale County, and reached Ozark in late September, 1888. In 1888 also, the Alabama Midland Railroad began construction on an extension of the railroad from Troy to Ozark, continuing to the new town of Dothan, and through Georgia to the Atlantic Coast; this line was completed in the summer of 1889, and resulted in the creation of Midland City in 1890 (McGee 1989:81-84). These two roads, both connecting Ozark to the outside world, were the only ones in the area until the early twentieth century. A 1912 map shows the Atlantic Coast Line railroad entering Dale County from the north to Ozark to Waterford, where it split; one branch headed east through Newton, Pinckard, and Midland City, while the other headed west through Daleville, Enterprise, and terminated at Elba (see Figure 9).

These railroad networks helped to solidify the ties between local residents and national credit and commercial networks. Objects, ideas, and credit began to flow throughout the nation, affecting even such remote areas as Coffee and Dale Counties. Extensive staple crop agriculture was one sign of integration into these broader networks, while domestic furnishings were another. Archaeological evidence from home sites in Fort Rucker documents these connections through patterns of household consumption. Of 249 sites located by Braley and Mitchelson (1984) following an examination of 1909 and 1910 soil survey maps, 125 had historic artifacts. The overwhelming majority of the artifacts were ceramics, primarily common and lower-grade earthenwares and stonewares from the late nineteenth century. These were used as relatively inexpensive containers, and could be acquired easily. Historical records do not indicate any kilns or ceramic production in the area, so presumably they came from the outside world. The archaeological evidence clearly indicates the growing presence of broader regional and national trade networks, with the introduction of such wares into daily household use.

The two counties also had a network of villages. These were remnants of the antebellum communities, which slowly began losing their isolation. Roads slowly improved which increased the potential for contact between people in different villages. Small churches, primarily for evangelical denominations, dotted the landscape; Figure 10 shows the locations of former churches and cemeteries at Fort Rucker. These churches provided a significant outlet for socialization in the county, and provided many of the services that would have been provided by various governments in less rural counties. Three of the five cemeteries which have been

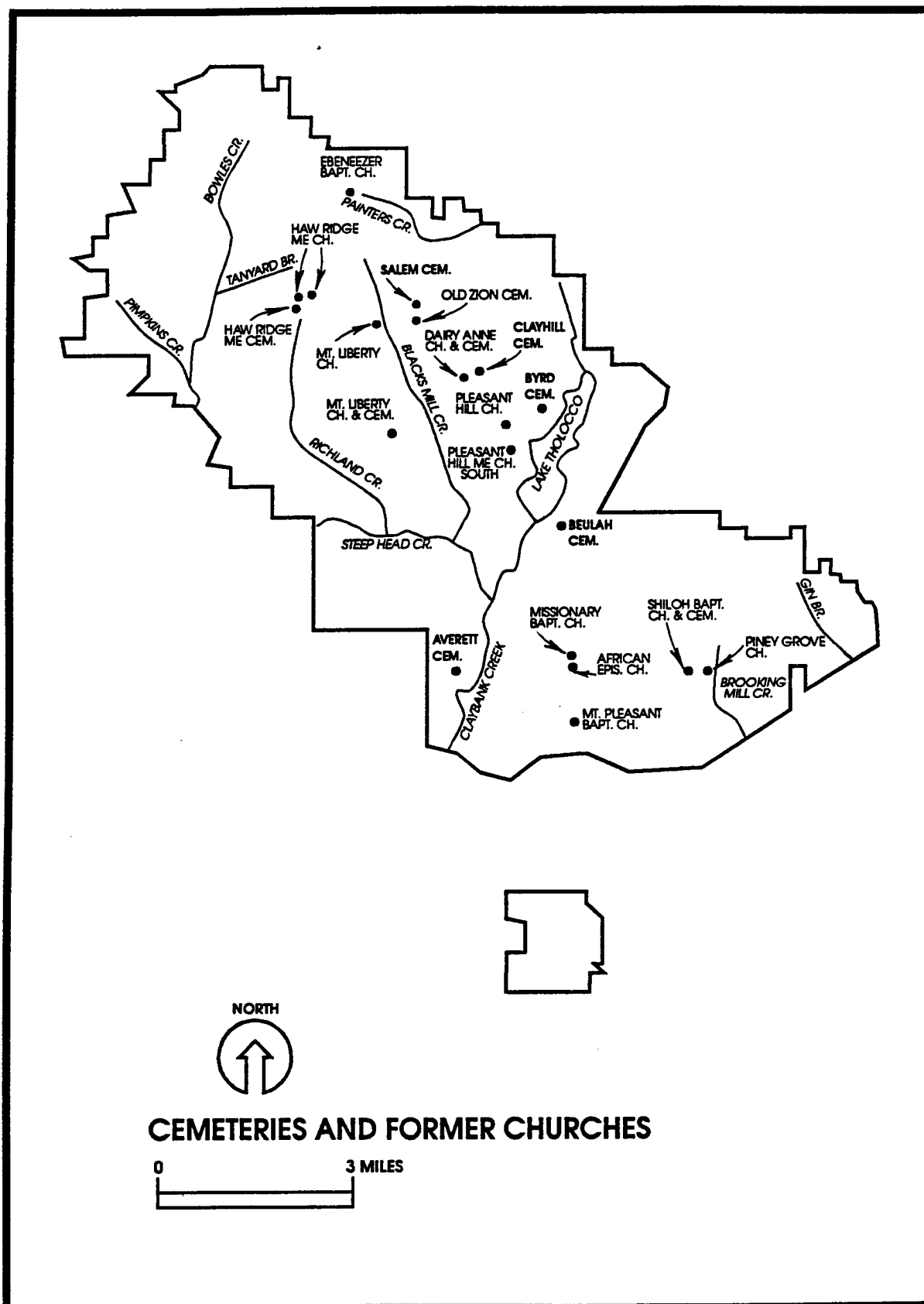


Figure 10. The Location of Known Cemeteries and Former Churches at Fort Rucker.

identified on Fort Rucker were attached to churches, and give testimony to the role of the churches in satisfying essential parts of life; the other two were most likely family cemeteries. The three churches whose cemeteries remain were also in the process of being dispersed before the Federal government entered the County, suggesting also the slow decline of the area, and the dispersal of the isolated antebellum counties. Mary Fleming (1957:83) testified to the fate of many of the small antebellum communities left behind in the railroad age of the late nineteenth century. It is sad, she recalled of Westville in 1902, "to think of the community where my girlhood days were spent, which was once so prosperous and such a pleasant place to live in, and now is so desolate."

Despite the changes in the community structure of the Counties, the vast majority of land continued to be farm land, more or less evenly split between improved crop land and woodland. Most of Coffee County's farms were still relatively small in 1910, with most containing between 20-50 acres. There were also a significant number of larger farms, containing up to 500 acres. The same pattern prevailed in Dale County. By 1930, on the eve of the Federal purchase of the Pea River Land Use Project, the average farm size in Coffee County was 80 acres, while it was 94 acres in Dale County (Bureau of the Census 1910:32-35; Bureau of the Census 1930a:972-975).

While agriculture remained the principal industry in Dale and Coffee Counties, the area saw a degree of economic diversification, partly in response to the railroads. By the turn of the century, Enterprise had saw and textile mills; in 1911, the Dorsey brothers opened a small machinery repair shop in Elba. Within years they had expanded into automobile sales, and manufacturers of stump pullers, log skidders, and commercial trailers. The lumber industry, with its principal offshoot, turpentine, became increasingly important for the region during the late nineteenth century, capitalizing on the large stands of pine trees in the two counties. As peanuts came to replace cotton as the principal crop in the 1910s, the Sessions brothers began in 1932 to process peanuts to produce peanut butter and peanut oil in Enterprise. Census reports point to 46 manufacturing establishments in Coffee County in 1929, and only slightly more in Dale County (Bureau of the Census 1930b:43).

Politically, the 1890s were as volatile a period as the nation has ever seen, and the Fort Rucker area felt the impact. Throughout the 1880s, farmers in the West and the South began to organize in protest of low prices for agricultural produce, high prices for manufactured goods, unfair credit requirements, and the uncertainty of entering a mass-market economy. This uncertainty was the less attractive side of the involvement in national commercial networks, which brought fancy-colored earthenware pots to otherwise bleak farmsteads. This rural protest movement, organized as the Farmer's Alliance in the late 1880s, began to move from farmers' cooperatives to direct, active political involvement as the Populist Party in the early 1890s. The Farmer's Alliance had a strong presence in Dale and Coffee Counties, with a warehouse in Ozark, and a store in Clayhatchee. This store still stood in the early 1980s, according to Braley and Mitchelson (1984), though a recent field inspection did not locate it, nor is it listed on either the NRHP or the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage.

## Chapter V. The Federal Government Arrives

Despite the southern farmers' surprising political power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, agricultural conditions continued to be highly unstable through the early twentieth century. While the Depression "officially began" with the spectacular stock market crash in late October of 1929, farming was in a bad state throughout the South by the mid-1920s. Business and industry continued to do relatively well in Alabama until the crash in the late 1920s, but farm prices and wages had been dropping at least since the middle of the decade. Farm ownership also declined during the 1920s; tenants operated 65 per cent of the state's farms in 1930, compared to 58 per cent in 1920. The boll weevil's lingering effects, the loss of international markets, bad weather, and soil erosion compounded the state's agricultural woes (Rogers et al. 1994:453).

State officials in Alabama had made several attempts to improve the state's agricultural conditions during the 1920s through organized and cooperative groups. The Alabama Cooperative Extension Service gained independent life in 1920, after being a branch of the research station at Auburn University. The Alabama Farm Bureau arose at the same time, and had organized branches in every county in the state by 1930. These agencies advocated reforms, although these reforms seldom helped those at the lowest levels of society, who in the 1920s "lived out their lives in a downward cascade of troubles" (Rogers et al. 1994:455). Alabama's farmers tended to move frequently in search of opportunities, rarely finding that things were much improved in one place over another. Alabama's per capita income was among the lowest in the nation, and was concentrated in the few urban areas of the state; in 1928 in two rural northeastern counties, for example, farm income dropped by over one-third (Rogers et al. 1994).

The Depression that began in 1929 hurt southeastern Alabama; the fact that other areas may have been hit harder serves only to disclose the suffering already present in the region. Dale County's two banks both failed, losing the life savings of many residents. The Federal Land Bank, the nation's major supplier of agricultural credits, began foreclosing on farms in the area. The New Deal, inaugurated in March, 1933 with President Franklin Roosevelt, contained many plans to revitalize

agriculture and cure the ills of decades of poverty in the South. The programs included crop reduction, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and the Rural Electrification Administration (Leuchtenburg 1963).

The erosive agricultural practices which the early settlers brought with them from the Carolinas (see Chapter IV) had continued throughout the late nineteenth century to deplete the soil severely. Farmers in the southern Piedmont, to the north and east of Coffee and Dale Counties, had abandoned fields in the immediate wake of the Civil War, which allowed devastating soil erosion. In the later nineteenth century, however, as tenancy spread throughout southern agricultural lands, crops were restored, though tenants tended toward land use practices which were more destructive than the former land owners and cultivators. As cotton monoculture increased its grip and spread in a southwesterly direction, soil erosion and depletion spread with it and became a significant problem throughout the South by the early twentieth century (Trimble 1974:69-90).

The New Deal programs that focused on land and soil conservation had the greatest impact on the Fort Rucker area. The US Department of Agriculture announced plans to purchase tracts of submarginal lands in 1934, to take them out of production and convert them to natural and wildlife refuges. The County Agent for Dale County, Doug Thomason, advocated the plan in Dale County. He worked with local Congressman Henry Steagall, an Ozark native and co-author of the Federal Banking Act in 1933, and Jesse Adams, the editor of Ozark's newspaper to convince the government to purchase the land for conversion, and then to persuade farmers and residents in the proposed tract to sell their lands (McGee 1987). The proposed tract, approximately 35,000 acres, was predominantly in Dale County but extended well into the northeast section of Coffee County. A 1939 article noted that the land "formerly consisted of 200 unsuccessful farms, with much of the area being cut-over woodlands and eroded soil. A large part was unfit for farming and had been abandoned" (*Alabama Game and Fish News* 1939).

The Federal government announced its commitment to purchase the properties in the proposed tract in October, 1935; voluntary land sales began the next year, and continued through the end of the decade. Figure 11 shows the Dale County section of the Pea River Land Use Project. Some properties, including a few



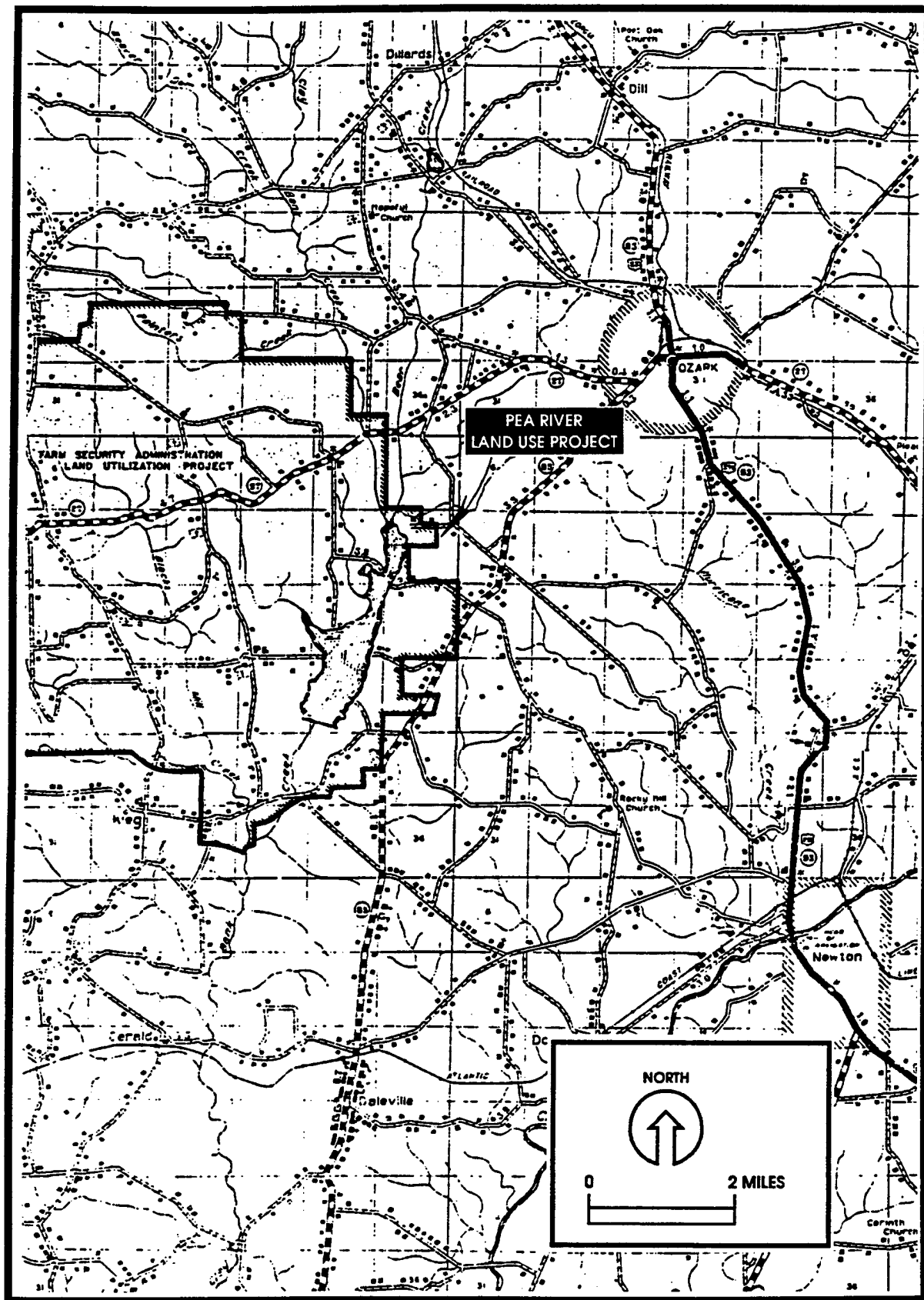


Figure 11. Map Showing the Dale County Section of the Pea River Land Use Project, c. 1937 ("General Highway and Transportation Map, Dale County, Alabama").

farms and most churches, schools, and cemeteries, remained out of the government's hands until the 1940s as well. The major projects in the Pea River Land Use Project, known locally as the "Bear Farm" (apparently from a quip by a local resident at the time that the government would grow bears on their new land), were planting trees as a reforestation measure, building parks, and the damming of Claybank Creek. The dam on Claybank Creek formed Lake Tholocco, which was a Muskogean Indian word apparently meaning "big and brave," allegedly applied to Sam Dale, the Indian fighter after whom the county had been named. These projects, coordinated by the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, employed many local residents. The Pea River Land Use Project was turned over to the state of Alabama for use as a recreation facility in 1940, on a 50-year lease.

#### 1941-1954

World War II [WW II] had a profound effect upon the South, more perhaps than any war in its history including the Civil War. It accelerated and brought to a new level the process of national integration that had been underway since the end of the Civil War. The overwhelming economic boom, like the proverbial river, lifted all sections of the nation in its wake. Even the attempts of the New Deal, valuable as they were, still left countless southerners unemployed, or working on marginal farm land. WWII instigated a sharp rise in the world-wide demand and prices for produce and cotton, making farming a more profitable enterprise. The massive and unprecedented Federal spending that the war entailed provided jobs for many thousands in the South who had been effectively unemployed since the 1920s. Coastal cities became shipyards, while inland cities became industrial centers; the impact on both urban and rural areas in the South was little short of revolutionary (Sosna 1989).

Like much of the nation, the South responded to call for voluntary involvement in the war effort. According to one recent historian (Grantham 1994:172), the South's contribution was distinctive in that "the region became the location of a disproportionate number of the nation's military bases and training centers." Local leaders in the South advertised the congenial reception of local people, but the congenial weather that allowed nearly year-round training and the

abundance of open, unused, often sub-marginal lands were equally important in selecting base locations. In addition, the South had access to much of Congress' senior leadership. One of the results of the one-party South was that Democratic Congressmen from the region tended to stay in office for a long time; this gave them great seniority, particularly when a Democratic president was in office (Grantham 1994:172-174). Southern Congressmen, including Henry Steagall from Dale County, were able to secure many bases for their states. Alabama alone secured twelve military bases.

Residents in Coffee and Dale Counties began in 1940 to lobby to return the Pea River Project, recently having come into state hands, to the Federal government for use as a military base. Congressman Steagall was at first reluctant, but soon offered his support and made crucial contacts with the Pentagon, and the War Department announced its plans to establish an Army training facility at the Pea River Project in July 1941. The plans called for extending the boundaries of the New Deal project south and west in Dale County, to include all lands up to the Atlantic Coast Line railroad. In early 1942 the government filed its condemnation suit under eminent domain for the 29,000 acres in the new lands (McGee 1987). Figure 12 shows the enlarged boundaries of Fort Rucker in Dale County.

J.E. Sirrine & Company completed the surveys and plans for the new camp, with the cantonment area in the southern part of the camp, close to Daleville. The plan of the camp is a modified U-shape, reflecting the trend toward curved plans for Army bases since World War I (WWI) under the influence of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr (Figure 13). The Army War College oversaw suggested site plans in WWI, and approved two basic designs: linear and U-shaped. Washington's oversight of bases continued in WW II, under Leon Zach, formerly with Olmsted Associates. In general, WW II camps tended to be rectangular or triangular in shape. This provided for articulated spaces for the three brigades that would train at each camp, and the centralized plan allowed for more efficient administrative oversight (Garner 1993). Thus, the shape of Camp Rucker as designed by J.E. Sirrine & Company is unusual for the time. The topography of the area, however, which featured a curved ridge of high ground, led to the shape of the cantonment.

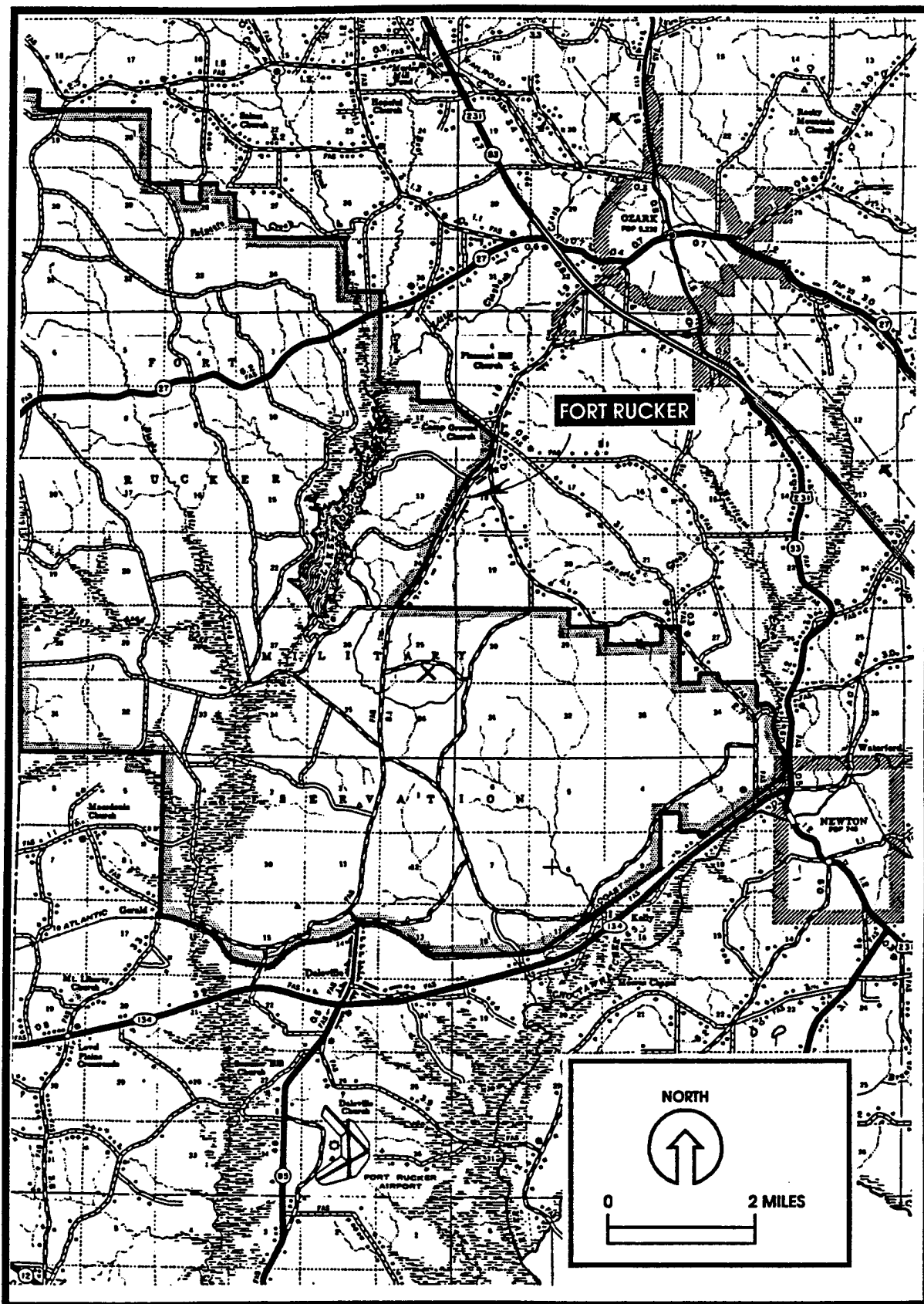


Figure 12. Map Showing the Enlarged Boundaries of Fort Rucker, c. 1954 ("General Highway Map, Dale County, Alabama").

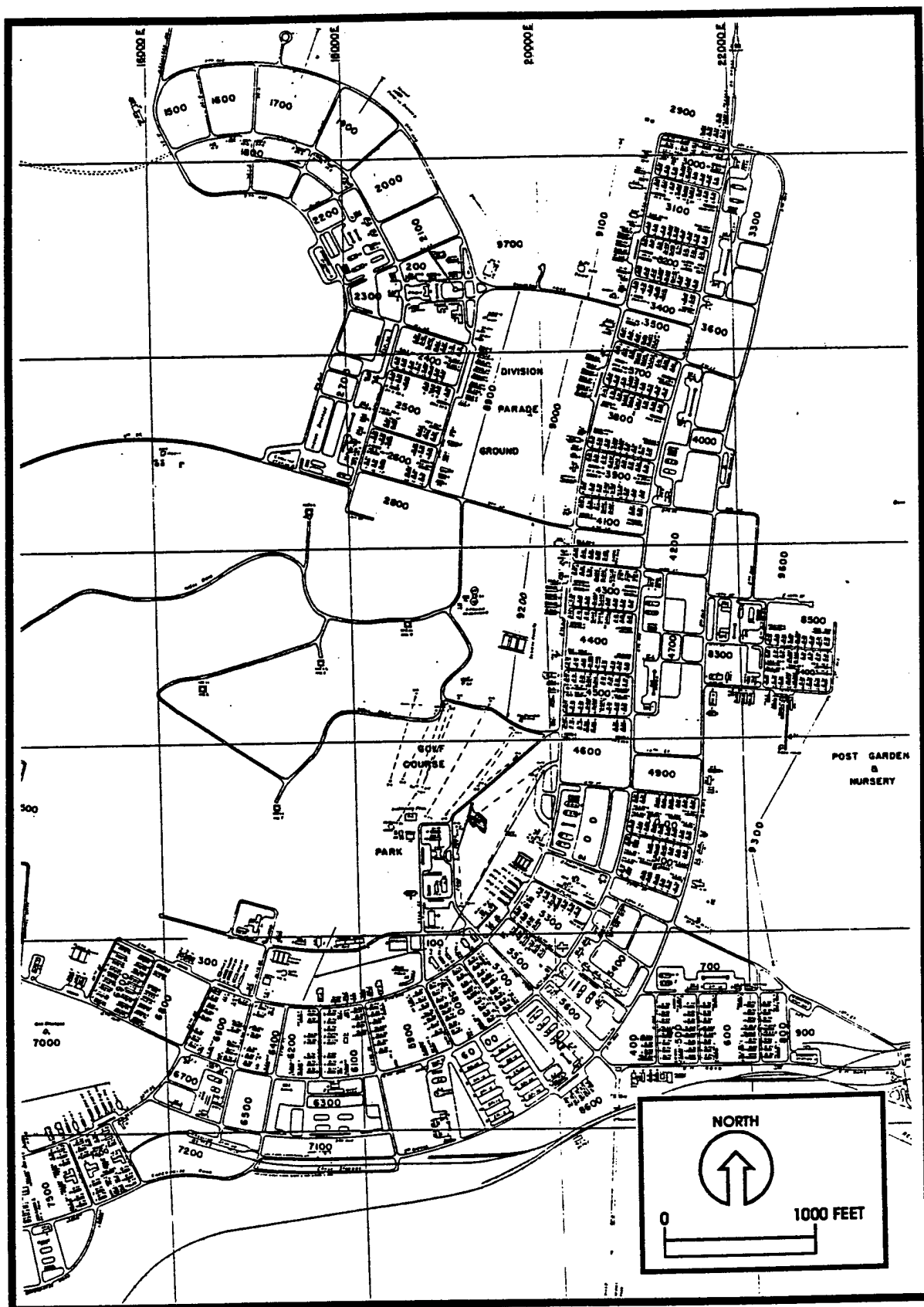


Figure 13. Plan of the Fort Rucker Main Cantonment Area in 1952.

The buildings at Camp Rucker conformed to specific, standardized types. Standardized military buildings came into use in the late nineteenth century, during the mobilization for the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Army began calling upon architects to design buildings and render drawings in the early twentieth century. Official plans for mobilization were presented in 1914, with the "600" series of buildings. A new series of buildings came into being after 1917; a final set of "700" series buildings was introduced by the Advisory Architect of the Army's Construction division between 1937 and 1940. The differences between the "600" and "700" series were principally in proportion and methods of construction. Concrete piers and footings replaced timber posts, which extended the life of the new series. The WWII buildings also contained plumbing and electrical facilities. Doors were moved from the sides to the gable ends, while wooden fire escapes were added. The buildings were built to a standard size to reflect the size of companies; typical barracks, for example, housed 63 men, which was half of a company of 126. The series "800" units, introduced in 1941, increased the proportions to allow more space per person and altered certain construction details (Garner 1993). The J.A. Jones Construction Company of Charlotte, North Carolina, won the bid to construct the buildings at Camp Rucker. This firm completed the 1,500 buildings, according to standardized Army plans, in 106 days in early 1942. Ultimately the grounds included 11 churches, 15 post exchanges, five theaters, and a hospital complex in addition to the barracks and administrative buildings. The largely unlandscaped grounds received a boost from the first commanding officer, Brigadier General [BG] Frederick W. Manley, who saw to the raising and planting of flowers, shrubs, and trees.

The surrounding towns responded to the influx of tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians; Ozark quickly sported a new theater, an 8-bay bus station, and a Soldiers' Information Station on the courthouse lawn, as well as a soldiers' Community House in a restored National Youth Administration building (McGee 1987). One recent historian (Cronenburg 1995:46) has noted that Camp Rucker was "the only military training installation established in Alabama during World War II that effected a permanent and dramatic transformation of the surrounding community." This transformation included the roads surrounding the Camp; when it expanded, and closed off some roads to civilian traffic, new routes had to be

negotiated among Army representatives and Dale and Coffee County officials (Minutes, Access Roads Conference).

The camp was originally named the Ozark Triangular Division Camp, a rather utilitarian reference to the organizational structure of an infantry division: each division had three regiments, and each regiment had three battalions. In January of 1942, however, the War Department announced that it would name the camp in honor of BG Edmund Rucker, a Tennessee-born Confederate officer who went on to become an industrial magnate in Birmingham, Alabama.

Camp Rucker, unlike its later incarnation as Fort Rucker, was designed as an infantry training base. While Fort McClellan was Alabama's main infantry training facility, Camp Rucker was not far behind in importance. The 81st Infantry Division, the famous "Wildcat" Division, was the first major unit formed at the post, with troops drawn from the Carolinas and Georgia. It saw extensive action in several campaigns in the Pacific theater. The 39th, 98th, and 69th Infantry Divisions were also formed at Camp Rucker during WWII. Late in the war, however, Camp Rucker was reorganized as a 5-regiment infantry replacement training center (Cronenburg 1995: 42-44). Figure 14 displays views of engineer units in training at Camp Rucker.

In addition to its training mission, Camp Rucker also served as a prisoner of war (POW) camp. The Army began bringing German and Italian POWs to American soil in 1942 to relieve overcrowded camps in Great Britain. Alabama had several POW camps, the first being near the town of Aliceville, in Pickens County. It was created in late 1942, consisting of 400 one-story frame houses designed to house 6,000 POWs and 900 soldier-guards. The first POWs arrived at Aliceville in June 1943. At the same time, German POWs began arriving at the state's second camp, near Opelika, in Lee County. Later that month another 2,000 POWs arrived at Fort McClellan. Camp Rucker was the fourth Alabama site to receive POWs, who began to arrive in February 1944. By the end of the war, Camp Rucker held 1,718 prisoners, most of whom were Germans. Italy surrendered in July 1943, and the rank and file Italian prisoners in the United States at that time were offered the chance to volunteer for service units with the Allies; approximately 33,000 did so. Camp Rucker, according to a recent historian, was designated as a training center for an engineering company of Italian service units (Cronenburg 1995: 102-103).

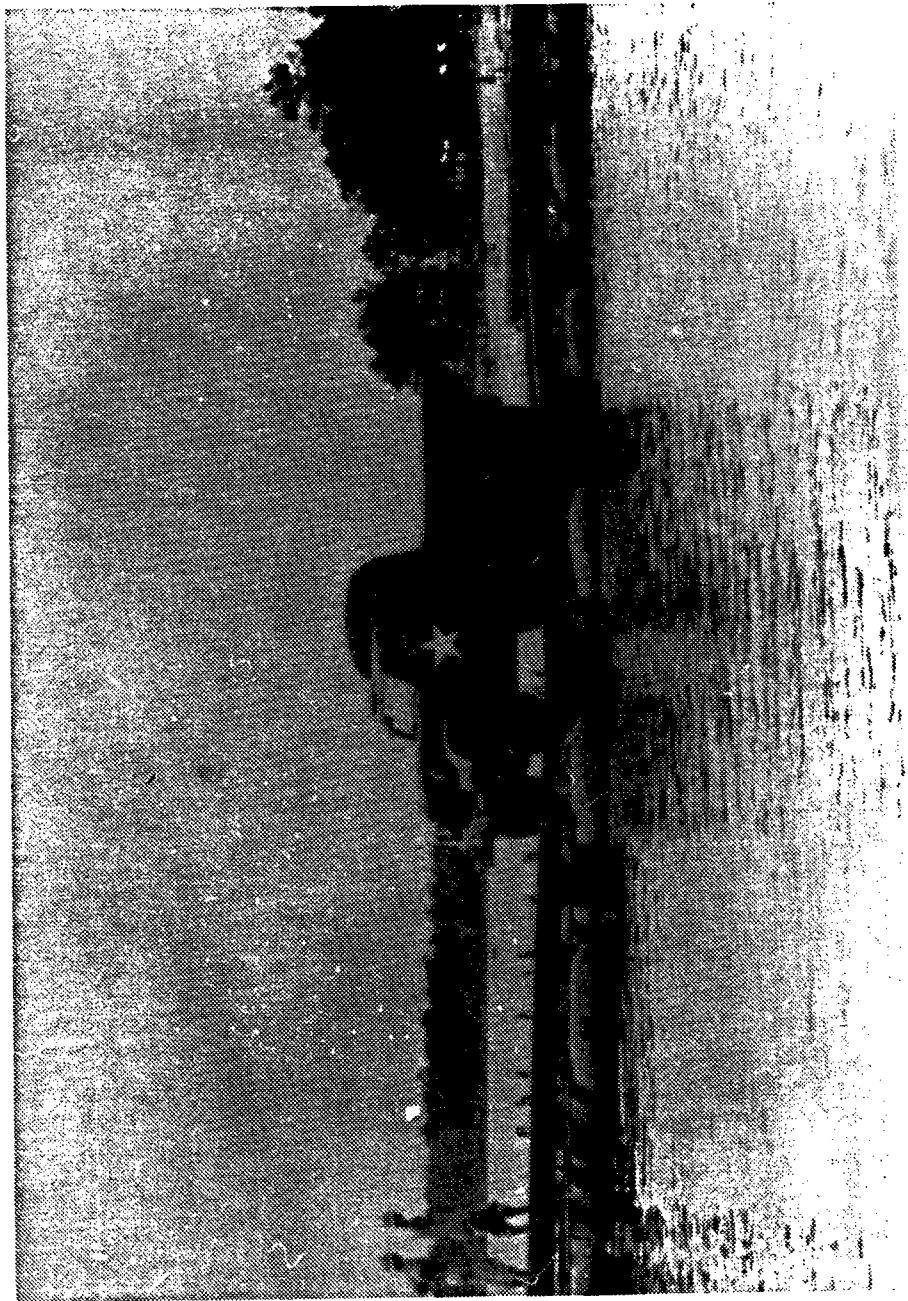


Figure 14. A View of an Engineer Unit in Training on Lake Tholocco at Camp Rucker.



Camp Rucker and US Army officials provided the POWs with a varied existence. Many of the prisoners worked on farms throughout southeast Alabama, but the camp also provided extensive "intellectual diversions" (Hoole 1967:93, 97). Reports of Field Service Visits by both military and civilian observers document life in the camp. An Army visitor in early 1945, for example, noted German-language films along with the "elimination of undesirable American films," a library containing 850 volumes and 29 magazines, athletic outlets including boxing, gymnastics, and soccer, a band and orchestra, radios and phonographs, a camp newspaper, pool tables, and extensive educational opportunities (Rapp 1945). Other visitors reported several church services, both Evangelical (Protestant) and Catholic confessions, along with more detailed descriptions of the educational programs, that included instruction in English, American History, Geography, French, and Russian. The YMCA had furnished books for these classes, as well as musical instruments for the camp's orchestra (Patte 1945). Another visitor observed a Protestant Bible study where the POWs "were studying the prophets and it was interesting to note how they tried to understand the present in the light of the Gospel, both regarding the judgement of the world and the promises to it" (Almquist 1945:2). The return of the German prisoners after the war was delayed, and the POW camp at Camp Rucker was not deactivated until March 1946 (Cronenburg 1995:103; Hoole 1967:93).

Camp Rucker's POW base was in the southeast section of the cantonment area, along the railroad. Brockington and Associates staff, using directions provided by the Command Historian, located the remains of the base in a now-wooded section close to the railroad lines; piles of concrete slabs alone remain. The lone intact remnant of the POWs is the altar and fittings in the Headquarters Place Chapel, now the Chapel of the Wings. These fittings were built by German POWs to a design by Major William T. Arnett, Infantry; the lectern, podium, rail, and four chairs were also built by prisoners (Memo, Lawson to Brown, 10 January 1989). The Chapel of the Wings is now the only remaining WWII chapel on Fort Rucker.

Hopes that Camp Rucker would remain active were dashed in late February 1946, when it was declared "temporarily inactivated." In May 1946, the Army announced plans to sell 350 of the temporary, tar-paper buildings on the base by sealed bids, as well as plans to return the 65,000 acres to the Alabama Department of Conservation. This later plan was never carried out, and the Federal government

still had possession of the camp in 1950 when the Korean War broke out. The camp had remained intact, as a small crew under Colonel Henry Gantt had maintained the buildings and grounds during its four closed years (McGee 1987). In August, 1950, the Birmingham newspaper announced that "Camp Rucker [was] coming out of moth balls." The article noted that while many of the buildings had been sold, 1,465 remained, and the grounds were in good shape. In addition, the Army announced plans to spend \$3 million to rehabilitate the buildings and grounds; Henderson, Black and Green of Troy won the bid for \$1.5 million for the buildings (*Birmingham News [BN]* 20 August 1950; McGee 1987:153-155).

Camp Rucker remained an infantry training base during the Korean War. The 406th Engineer Brigade was the first to arrive, while the 47th (Viking) Infantry Division formed the main unit at the camp. The Korean War reactivation of Camp Rucker ended quickly, however; as the War wound down in 1953, the Army announced that it would phase out a number of camps, including Rucker. The potential economic impact on the surrounding communities was severe. The Camp's payroll for December, 1953, for example, was nearly \$2 million, which would represent a significant loss to the surrounding communities (McGee 1987:164-65; *Montgomery Advertiser [MA]* 4 April 1954).

### 1954-Present

These dire predictions did not last long. As WW II turned into the Cold War, military engagement shifted away from advancing columns of troops and tanks threatening cities and fields. The Cold War ushered in an era of international political face-offs where ideological consistencies were equally as important as specific territory. The intensive ideological roots of these confrontations, however, elevated military conflicts in previously unheralded parts of the world to the front of international ranks. This resulted in a series of wars in areas of dense forestation, where infrastructural developments were severely limited, and where the line between civilian and military was blurred. These conditions called for new ways of thinking of and conducting warfare. Army Aviation, and the reprise of Camp Rucker, were a part of this new way of thinking.

During WW II, and particularly in the strained conditions of the Korean War, aviation became a stronger part of the Army's force. It grew within the context of conflict between branches of the Army, and later between the US Air Force and the US Army. Originally, the Army Air Corps (AAC) was responsible for armed aviation, including bombers and fighters. The organic aviation of the Army Ground Forces (AGF) was restricted to unarmed aviation, including reconnaissance and transportation. Leaders of the AAC sought to maintain that distinction during WW II and after, arguing that it alone should bear the burden of carrying weapons in the air. The National Security Act of 1947 abolished the old Departments of Army and Navy, and created instead a Department of Defense; it also established the US Air Force as a separate military branch, along with the Army and Navy. The Air Force emerged from the old Army Air Corps, while the aviation segments of AGF became Army Aviation. While the names were changed, the disputes continued as the Air Force sought to contain or eliminate the Army's use of armed aviation (Kitchens 1992, 1993).

During WW II, Army Aviation training was handled by the Department of Air Training's Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After the separation of the US Air Force, Army Aviation gained separate status within the Army, with its own Aviation School in early 1953, shortly before the Armistice in Korea. As Army Aviation training increased during the Korean War, competition for airspace at Fort Sill between artillery and aviation became intense. In early 1954, the Army began looking for a new training location. Several sites were identified; after a number had been considered and dismissed, Camp Rucker came to the fore (Kitchens 1994a).

Several conditions and circumstances led to Camp Rucker's selection. The meteorological conditions in southeast Alabama were ideal for aviation training and aircraft protection. In addition, Camp Rucker already had the Ozark Army Air Field south of the main base, now known as Cairns Army Airfield, which could accommodate fixed-wing training. Finally, since the base was in the process of being closed, there would be no conflict with other Army activities. Aviation officials moved quickly in selecting Camp Rucker in 1954; the decision to leave Fort Sill was made in May, 1954, and Camp Rucker was selected in late July 1954.

New classes began training at Camp Rucker in September 1954, while training operations at Fort Sill were phased out during the next year. The facilities at Camp Rucker, however, required extensive rehabilitation. The Ozark Army Airfield had minimal facilities for fixed-wing aircraft, the camp had only three adequate living quarters for officers, while Aviation training facilities were nearly non-existent on this former Infantry base. In addition, Camp Rucker did not become a *permanent* facility until October, 1955; temporary status meant that no permanent buildings could be constructed. Finally, the 47th Infantry Division had stripped "the post of all property which was at all usable anywhere else" (Kitchens 1994b:39).

The post was officially redesignated Fort Rucker in October 1955. This gave it permanent status and allowed the Army to construct permanent buildings and facilities. Lowe Army Airfield, begun as Auxiliary Field No. 1, was dedicated in September 1957 for fixed-wing aircraft; Hanchey Army Heliport opened in October 1959. Fort Rucker also began a "\$1.2 million 'face-lifting'" in 1957 (*BN* 18 July 1957). This included building the Luria hangar, renovating supply buildings, replacing wooden housing fixtures with concrete and aluminum, adding air conditioning, and building a sewage plant. In addition, work began on \$10 million in housing projects. In 1961 the Army announced plans to build another 498 "Capehart" homes for the Fort, totalling \$7 million. Expense summaries for fiscal years 1956-1988 indicate building programs of \$2-\$28 million per year. New student dormitories and classrooms were built during the early 1960s, and reflected the new times; a caption under a newspaper photograph of a brick student dormitory under construction noted that the "'Infantry look' fades as base slowly takes on modern Army dress" (*BN* 15 January 1961) (Figure 15). These building campaigns have changed dramatically the physical presence and appearance of Fort Rucker.

### Helicopters at Fort Rucker

New technologies as well as new geopolitical situations changed the face of warfare in the Cold War era. This technology gave Fort Rucker a central role in the development of the American military in the Cold War. Early in the post-war years, when confidence in nuclear weapons was in its highest, perhaps most naive, phase, "mutually assured destruction" developed into the guiding principle for a military



Figure 15. A View of the New Classroom Buildings in the Main Cantonment of Fort Rucker, c. 1964.

response to an attack from the Soviet Union. Attacks arising from Soviet influence, however, were not aimed at the United States directly but only indirectly, in areas of the world that were not yet solidly in one sphere or the other. Southeast Asia, given its proximity to China and the Soviet Union, and as part of the newly vital Pacific rim, became the main area of focus. Given the terrain and the nature of the combatants, nuclear warfare was never a serious consideration.

However, given the nature of the terrain and the combatants, this was not warfare as usual. Korea and Vietnam, the two principal areas of contention, were rarely fought by traditional means; as Thomas Thayer noted in his work on Vietnam, this was a "War Without Fronts" (Thayer 1985). The armed helicopter, developed in conjunction with the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, has made a drastic change in the nature of American military strategy. Fort Rucker was in the vanguard of this branch of Army Aviation during the 1950s and 1960s.

The technology for helicopters was developed in the 1920s and 1930s. A German pilot, Hanna Reitsch, made the first true helicopter flight in 1937, and the US Army began testing rotor-wing technology in 1937. The "airmobile concept" emerged in the China-Burma-India theater in WW II, when it was used for medical evacuation purposes; helicopters continued this mission in the Korean War during the early 1950s. In 1951 the Marine Corps broke new ground when they began using helicopters to replace one frontline infantry company with another; mobility has been one of the crucial aspects to a military campaign as long as wars have been fought, and the use of the helicopter to replace troops was a significant and innovative development in the history of military technology.

The Army initially used helicopters for unarmed assistance, particularly cargo transport and aeromedical evacuation (Kitchens 1992; Kitchens 1993). The Army began a reconsideration of its use of armed helicopters in 1951, under the impetus of General Mark Clark. Arming helicopters required thinking in new ways, however, and the project found few adherents in the early 1950s. The "Able Buster" project was proposed in 1954 at Camp Rucker, in part as "an experiment in the speculative field of the nature of atomic warfare" (Hutton 1957:147). It was also a result of "airborne enthusiasts [who] were looking for an infallible anti-tank weapon" (Hutton 1957:146). The line between atomic and conventional warfare was not as tightly

defined then as it is now, and Fort Rucker's first commanding officer, BG Carl Hutton, suggested that helicopters could be a delivery system for the new weapons. In the mid-1950s the Army Chief of Staff, General Matthew Ridgway, again began pushing for the development of the airmobile concept in the Army's strategy; Camp Rucker was implicated in this innovative development as the home of the US Army Aviation School after the Korean War.

Hutton, however, found little official Army support for his wishes to continue experimenting with armed helicopters. Project Able Buster was turned down by the Army administration in 1956, and Hutton and his officers at Fort Rucker began their own experiments in sky cavalry without official approval; these actions resulted in the 7292nd Aerial Combat Reconnaissance Company (Experimental). The early mistakes, Hutton noted, were in trying to mount too much firepower on the helicopter, rather than stressing mobility. The Company experimented with a variety of weapons systems mounted on different helicopters, and soon began offering demonstrations to visiting Generals, one of which was to stage an attack across Lake Tholocco, "doing a job which no other vehicles could do" (Hutton 1957:157) (Figure 16 and 17). In his 1957 memoirs, Hutton stressed the revolutionary nature of helicopter technology in military strategy; the sky cavalry, he noted, "is not limited to avenues of approach on the ground. It is at its highest effectiveness when it can utilize terrain which is difficult or inaccessible for ground movement. Habitual concepts of distance lost their meaning" (Hutton 1957:160).

In battle conditions through the early 1960s, however, helicopters were still used only for observation of enemy troops, medical evacuation, and troop replacement (Harrison 1969; LePore 1994; Lockwood 1968). In 1961, the new Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara ordered the further development of the airmobility concept, particularly with the further innovation of armed helicopters. This effectively changed the concept of cavalry, which had already shifted from horses to armored vehicles, to imply assault helicopters as an organic, mobile attack force as part an Army attack. When the reports had been compiled under the direction of Gen Hamilton Howze, McNamara ordered a test of the new "sky cavalry," which took place over Fort Benning, Georgia in late June 1965. Fort Benning was chosen for this role due to the number and type of ground troops necessary for the testing. This test was successful, and the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was in Vietnam

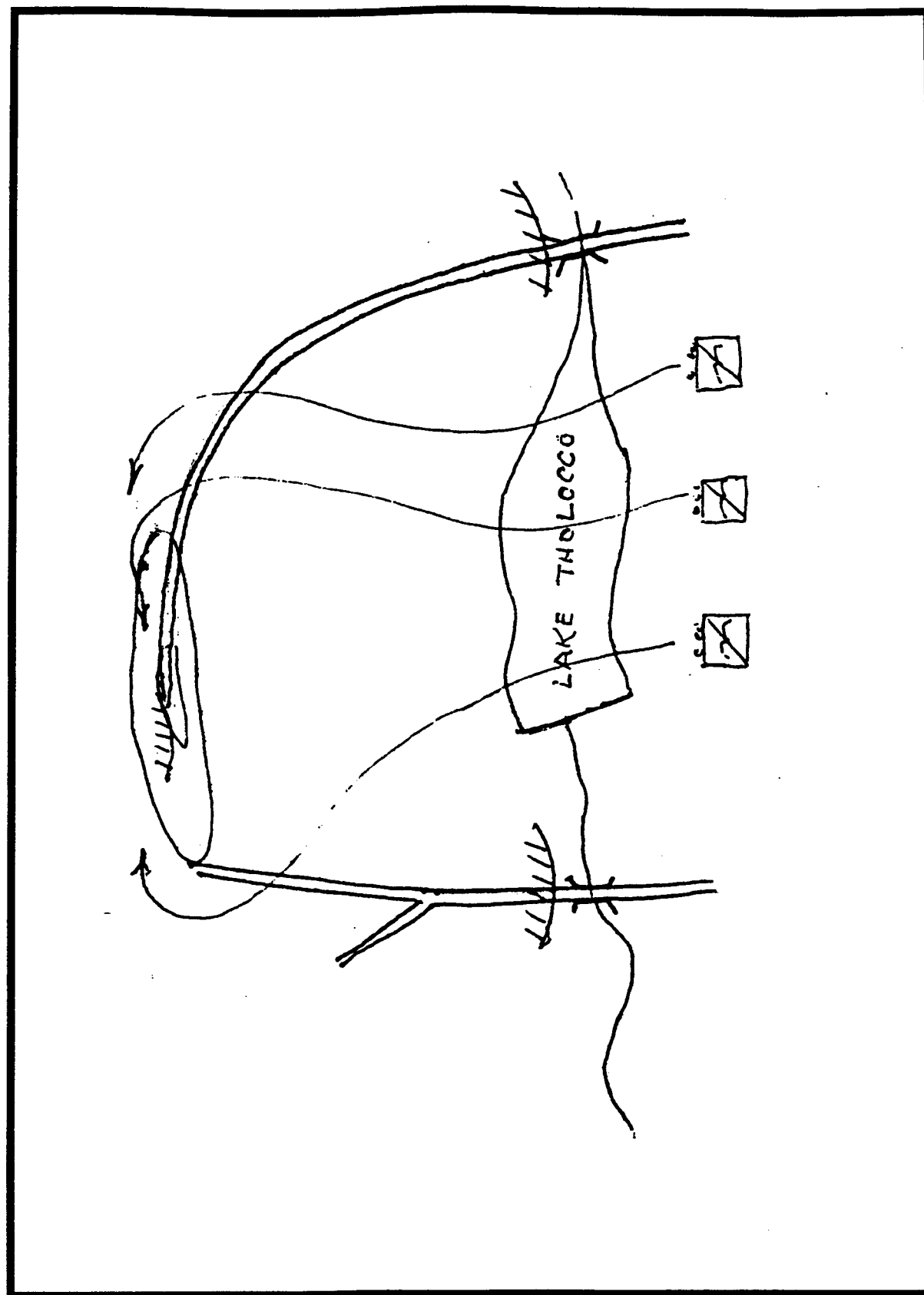


Figure 16. A Drawing by BG Carl Hutton showing a Helicopter Demonstration at Fort Rucker in 1956.



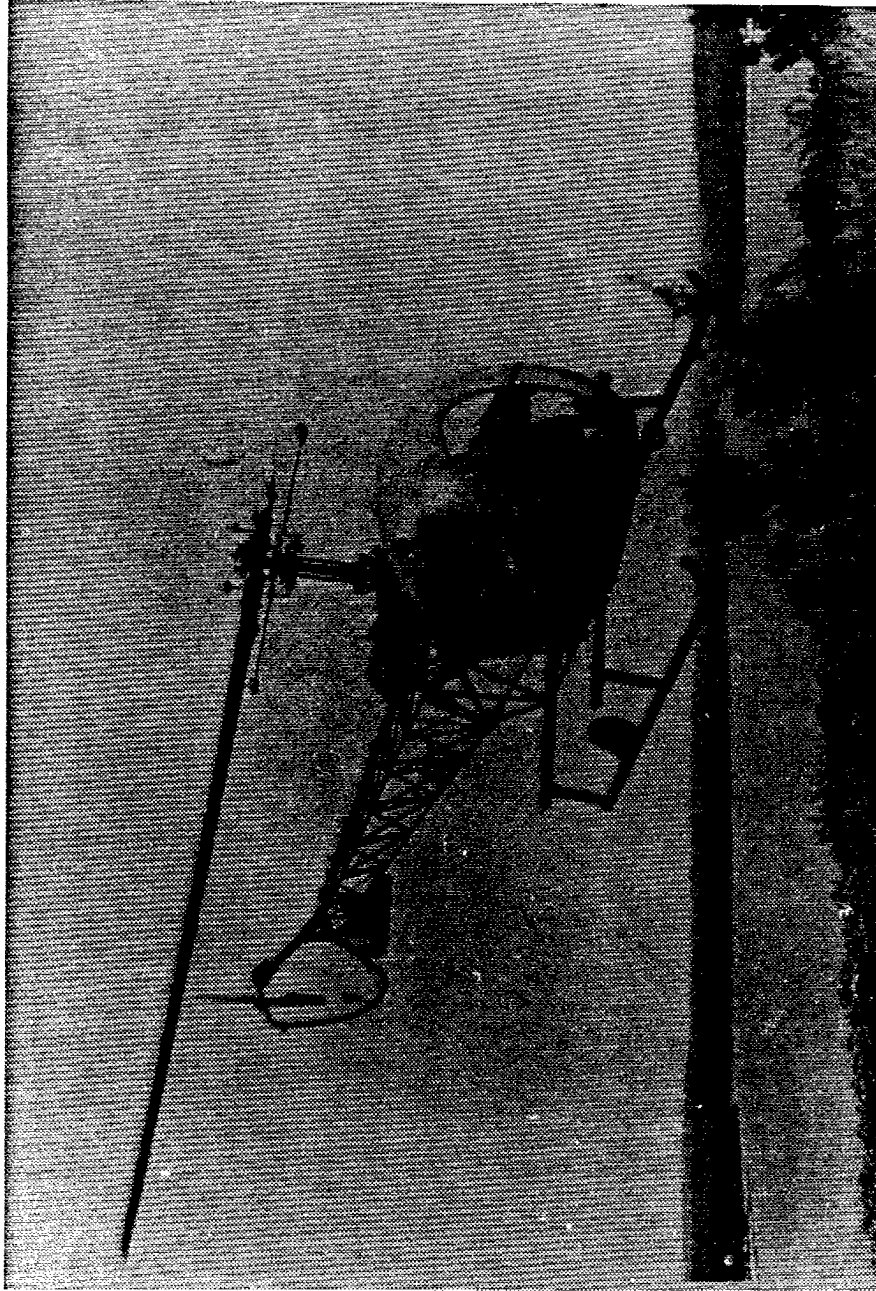


Figure 17. A View of OH-13E Helicopter in flight over Lake Tholocco, Fort Rucker.

by September (1st Cav Div, 1965; Harrison 1969:24; LePore 1994:34-35; John Kitchen, personal communication 3 October 1995).

Vietnam was the proving-ground for this pathbreaking technology. As one historian (LePore 1994) has noted, "The use of the helicopter in the Vietnam conflict was to change forever the American doctrine of tactical warfare." Their mobility and multidimensional capacities allowed them to work much more effectively in the particular conditions of Vietnam, which "was bereft of an extensive road and highway system"; the roads which did exist were often under sniper attack (LePore 1994:35). Helicopters continued their Korean War uses, including medical transportation, transporting ground forces in specific areas, rescuing downed aviators, and aerial reconnaissance (Figure 18). However, they also began providing heavily armed close air support. The helicopter, according to one historian (Lewy 1978:24), "gave government forces a new mobility and at first terrified the VC." While the factor of fear was temporary, the helicopter's mobility was a lasting advantage, and a significant contribution to military technology.

The introduction of the helicopter in Army tactics had its problems. Helicopters were noisy, and some complained that they "served as nothing more than a timely warning device" (LePore 1994: 36). In addition, helicopters were often too lightly armed to withstand ground fire; they were close to the ground and the guns, and often did not have adequate firepower to respond (Morrocco 1984). Nonetheless, helicopters were a crucial part of the war in Vietnam, whatever the measure of success of the war in general. As a newspaper article noted in 1966, "the army pilot behind the plexiglass in a helicopter's cockpit has become virtually the symbol of the mobile warfare of Viet Nam" (*BN* 17 July 1966). Hanchey Field, the writer went on to claim, had become "the Free World's busiest heliport," with more than 5,000 flights weekly.

Fort Rucker in its modern Army Aviation phase has thus gained its greatest distinction for its role in developing the helicopter as a vital and organic part of the Army's arsenal and strategy. Fort Rucker specialized in helicopter training; during the 1960s it recreated the conditions in Vietnam as closely as possible. It has been one the Army's two principal helicopter training areas along with Fort Walters, Texas, until Fort Walters closed in recent years. It has been the Army's primary

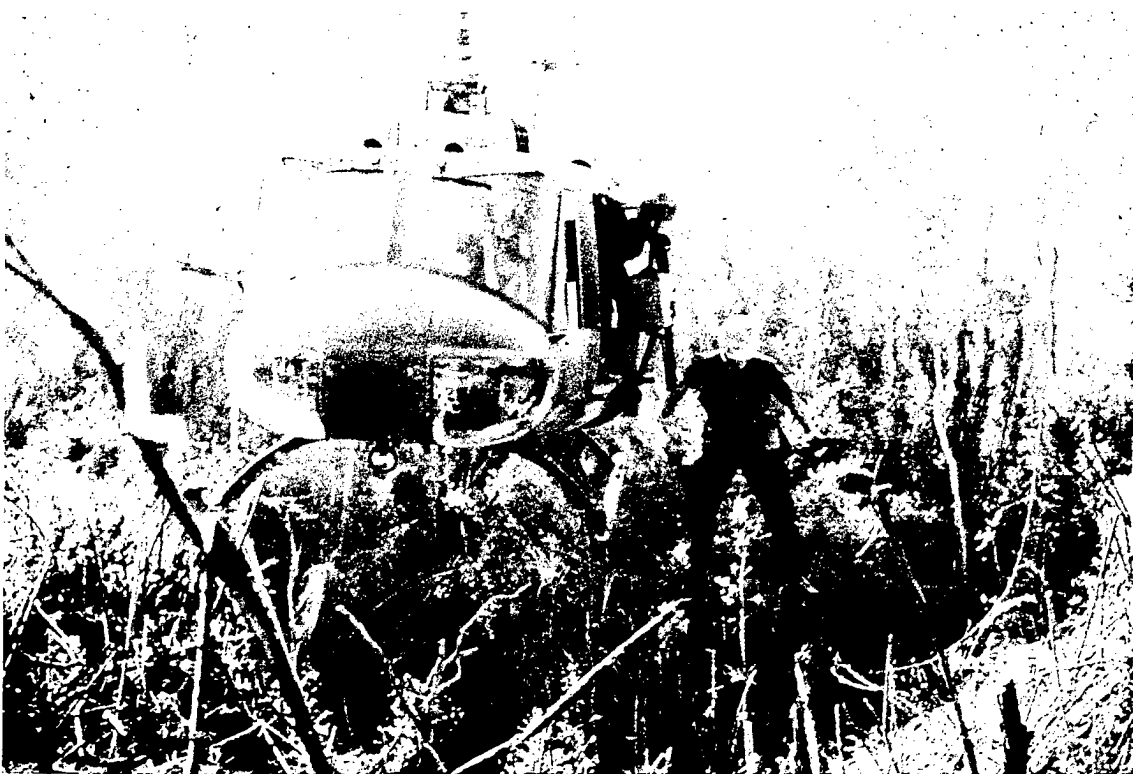


Figure 18. Views of Airmobile Troop Delivery in Vietnam.

training facility since then. In 1966, the Army created the 1st Aviation Brigade, which had tactical and administrative control over the Army's helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft in Vietnam; it served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1973, when it was sent to Fort Rucker as a training brigade; it became a combat aviation brigade in 1988 (LePore 1994: 36) (Figure 19). Currently, Lowe Field serves as the primary helicopter training facility, while Hanchey Field continues to be primarily a heliport. Cairns Army Airfield, which also accommodates the few fixed-wing aircraft still used at Fort Rucker, also serves as a heliport. While some fixed-wing training is available through Fort Rucker, helicopter training has constituted an increasing share of Fort Rucker's activities since the 1970s.

As a result, the development of the helicopter as an aspect of American military strategy represents Fort Rucker's principal Cold War and US Army significance. Fort Rucker was at the center of the Army's early testing and development of armed helicopters in particular, in tests authorized by BG Carl Hutton beginning in 1956. This was a major development in American military history with dramatic consequences for American participation in the Vietnam War, clearly one of the central events in the Cold War.

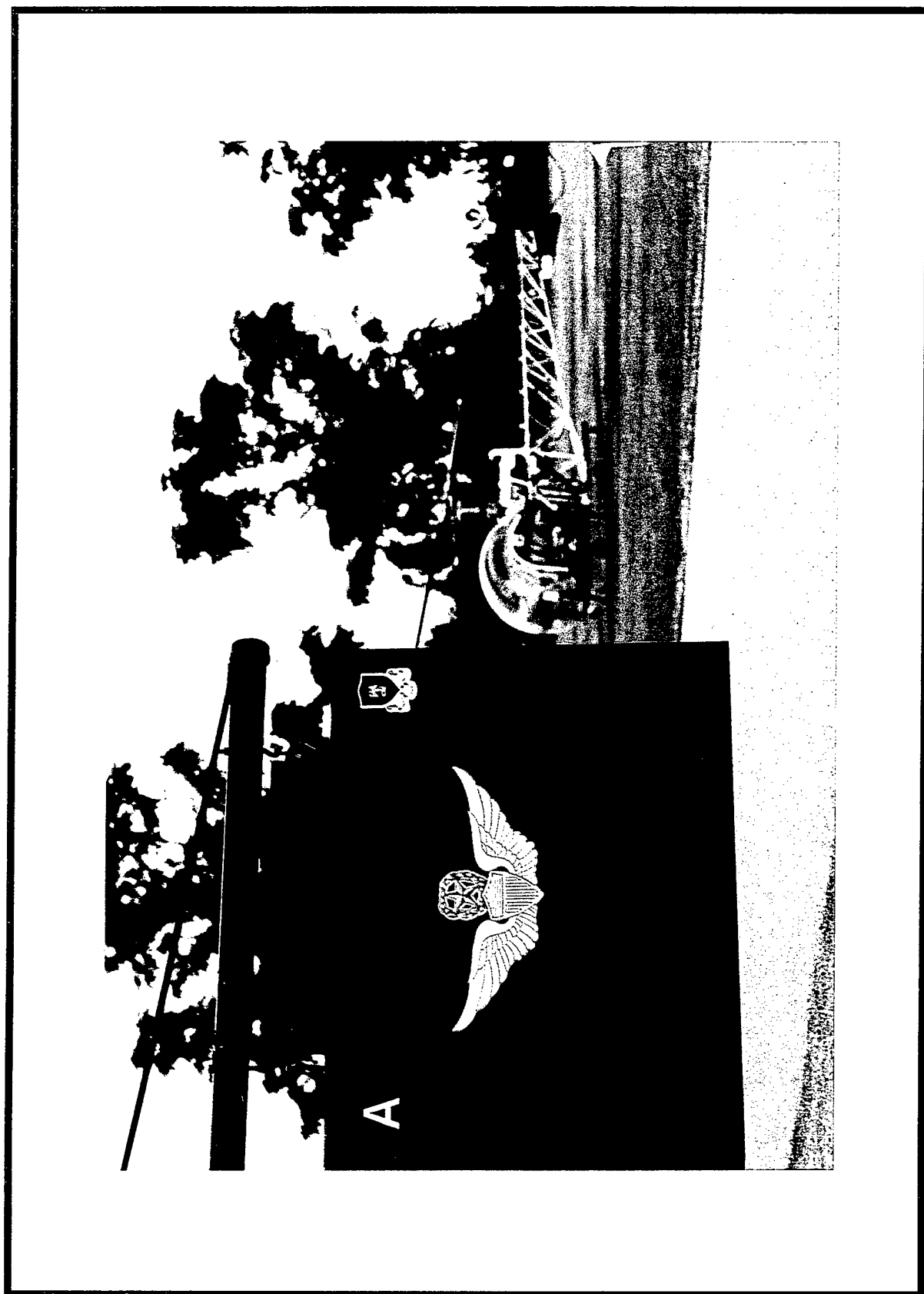


Figure 19. The US Army Aviation Center and School at Fort Rucker.

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